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General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

36th plenary meeting
Monday, 3 November 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Cujba (Republic of Moldova), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 40 and 44

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/63/3)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/371)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/63/255)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.14)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/83)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.15)

The Acting President: In connection with agenda item 40, I would like to remind the members of the General Assembly that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/316 of 1 July 2004, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2008, to consider agenda item 40 in its entirety in plenary, on the understanding that the administrative, programme and budgetary aspects should be dealt with by the Fifth Committee.

At the same meeting, the Assembly took note of the clarification that, in implementing resolution 58/316 to consider item 40 in its entirety in plenary, the relevant parts of chapter I of the report that are under agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees will be considered by the Committees concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Léo Mérorès, President of the Economic and Social Council, to introduce the report of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), President of the Economic and Social Council (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to introduce the 2008 report of the Economic and Social Council (A/63/3). The Council's substantive session in July took place at an important juncture. It was a transition year for the Economic and Social Council, which has now operationalized many of the new functions given to it by the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in particular the biennial Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) and the annual ministerial review of the implementation of the international development goals.

Today, allow me to briefly highlight the key outcomes of the Council's work so far and then to focus on the future, including the steps forward. We began the year with the annual special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade

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Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The meeting made an important contribution to the preparations of the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, which — as we all know — will be held in Doha, Qatar, from 29 November to 2 December 2008.

Turning now to the high-level segment, the 2008 Development Cooperation Forum, including its series of preparatory meetings, was, in the view of many, a success. Given the broad mandate, an important objective of the preparations for the first Forum was to establish the Economic and Social Council as a principal forum for political dialogue and policy review on the effectiveness and coherence of international development cooperation. Another objective was to contribute to the outcome of key intergovernmental processes, such as the upcoming Doha Review and the recently concluded Accra High-level Forum. Those objectives have been achieved, and the Accra Agenda for Action reflects several of the policy messages of the Development Cooperation Forum.

A number of factors account for the preliminary success of the Development Cooperation Forum, including the perceived quality of the high-level symposiums held under the auspices of the Forum, the professionalism and political balance of the analytical work, including the Secretary-General's report, the ability to attract key development cooperation actors and the strong public support from stakeholder groups, such as parliamentarians, civil society and local governments. Indeed, the Forum is seen as having established a comparative advantage in organizing multi-stakeholder consultations on aid issues.

While progress has been made in building political support for and ownership of the Forum by the whole range of stakeholders, the Forum also faces several challenges. One is to strengthen the distinct identity of the Forum as a leading global forum for dialogue among senior policymakers dealing with development cooperation at the country level.

A related challenge is to further raise awareness of the Development Cooperation Forum among practitioners at the country level, especially since adding experiences from the local level to the debate at the global level is a particular comparative advantage of the Forum.

It is important that the preparations for the 2010 Forum further strengthen its contribution to international development cooperation. An important recommendation of the 2008 Forum was that it should play a key role as an international mutual accountability mechanism that would draw together analysis of progress in national and global-level mutual accountability processes. For the 2010 Forum to be able to advance the global dialogue on this important issue, it is important that member States and other stakeholders actively participate in the upcoming preparatory process.

The 2008 annual ministerial review focused on sustainable development, which encompasses economic growth, social development and environmental protection. It helped spur the efforts of countries to implement the global consensus on sustainable development at the national level and provided practical guidance to assist in those efforts. The annual review also served to advance the ongoing work on climate change, which was also bolstered by the climate change and development event organized in the run-up to the substantive session. This meeting discussed ways on how developing countries can cope with climate change and how to reduce the world's carbon footprint.

The national voluntary presentations during the annual review continue to be seen by member States as a very important mechanism for strengthening accountability for fulfilment of development goals. This year brought presentations from developed countries, namely Belgium, Finland, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, which discussed lessons from their development policies and programmes. Chile, Kazakhstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the United Republic of Tanzania shared both their success stories and the specific obstacles to implementation at the country level. The success of the annual review as a collaborative review mechanism is reflected in the large number of volunteers for 2009 and 2010.

The impact and visibility of the high-level segment were enhanced by an extensive series of side-events, such as the annual ministerial review innovation fair and ministerial breakfasts and panel discussions organized by member States, entities of the United Nations system and non-governmental stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. Together, those meetings served to promote and

catalyse tangible, multi-stakeholder partnerships for implementing the international development agenda.

The 2008 high-level segment concluded with the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration. It underscored the need for urgent, collective and collaborative action by all members of the international community to address global financial turmoil, rising food and fuel prices, environmental degradation and climate change.

Many other outcomes of the Council's substantive session are of key relevance to the work of the General Assembly. They will assist, I am sure, the Second and Third Committees in their work.

First, the Economic and Social Council is entrusted with the follow-up to the implementation of the General Assembly resolution on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations system. As called for by the Council, the United Nations system is now proceeding with the implementation of the Assembly's resolution on the policy review, and the resolution adopted by the Council this summer gave new impetus to these efforts.

Secondly, member States recognized and encouraged the ongoing strengthening of humanitarian coordination, particularly in partnerships, funding and leadership capacity on the ground and of mainstreaming gender equality in humanitarian assistance. Member States have underlined the importance of national capacity-building, disaster-preparedness and risk reduction, and have strengthened legal disaster relief frameworks. Member States also reacted to the reality on the ground by condemning the increased attacks against humanitarian personnel, urging the persecution of perpetrators.

The Council has now started to convene emergency sessions, such as the one on the global food crisis this year. The time may have come to adopt a regular practice of turning to the Council whenever major emergencies occur. The Council organized a meeting on the food crises, which was very well attended.

Thirdly, the Council's role in peacebuilding and post-conflict development was also recognized and received unwavering support from member States. The extension of the mandate of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti is a manifestation of the confidence that member States placed in the Council's role of supporting a country's long-term development.

The Council's informal discussion on possible modalities of interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, using the framework of the work of its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau, generated a general consensus on the need to further explore how to bring development work into the Peacebuilding Commission and how to bring the peace and security dimensions of peacebuilding into the work of the Council. In my view, the time has come perhaps to clarify the relationship between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Council and to define the modalities for their interaction.

The Council intends to expand the range of stakeholders that the United Nations can partner with in promoting the implementation of the internationally agreed developments goals, particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Its philanthropy event discussed how corporate philanthropy can contribute to advancing the MDGs, especially for sustainable development. The Council intends to further expand its outreach to the philanthropic community and could continue discussions how to facilitate the growth and flow of philanthropic resources on a global basis and the possible establishment of a United Nations Philanthropy Day as a way to mobilize interest and support for philanthropy worldwide.

My experience as President of the Economic and Social Council has shown me that the convening power and the spirit of engagement that have been the hallmark of the United Nations conferences are well captured in the Council. The Council has opened new vistas of cooperation among various stakeholders. I find this to be an encouraging sign. The Council has great potential for becoming the forum for promoting collaborative action in the pursuit of current crises. I urge the Assembly to utilize this potential to the fullest.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Antigua and Barbuda to introduce draft resolutions A/63/L.14 and A/63/L.15.

Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Group wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/63/83 and we also welcome the report just

introduced by the President of the Economic and Social Council and contained in document A/63/3. During this year's substantive session of the Economic and Social Council on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development", ministers pointedly recognized that the international community was meeting at a critical juncture in our efforts to realize these goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and that we faced multiple challenges in our efforts to achieve them.

Back then in July, less than four months ago, some were still sceptical about recognizing the looming turmoil in financial markets as a crisis, preferring instead to use the anodyne terms "instability" and "uncertainty". In the short space of time since then, the world has come to recognize the financial situation for what it is: a crisis. The crisis in international financial markets has now permeated the global economy, significantly slowing global economic growth. This, added to the food crisis and rising fuel prices, as well as the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change, means that urgent individual and collective actions, both short- and long-term, are needed to curtail the impact on development and to ensure that development gains are not reversed and future efforts are not undermined.

Our ministers expressed determination to take concerted action to promote progress towards the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in the face of those overwhelming risks to development. We certainly hope that the strong political will that is required will be demonstrated in a timely fashion.

In the face of such challenges, development remains a central goal in and of itself, and sustainable development, in its economic, social and environmental dimensions, constitutes a key element of the overarching framework and purpose of the United Nations. During the Council's discussions on various economic and social issues, the Group of 77 and China identified several areas where progress was lacking and which we deemed vital for development and for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

There is general agreement that global challenges such as climate change and the environmental crisis, the global food crisis, the financial crisis, the energy crisis and the crisis in international policy and institutional infrastructure — which bear disproportionately on developing countries and the poor — have to be addressed in an integrated and holistic manner. They cannot be sequenced and have to be addressed with urgency. The international community has the framework of the MDGs and the other internationally agreed development goals around which to rally efforts. But actual implementation actions remain woefully lacking. There is now an opportunity for extraordinary responses from the international community. But the window of opportunity is closing very fast and will be lost, if we are not swift to respond concretely and instead carry on with the status quo.

As we continue to examine and assess the role of the United Nations system in ensuring a coordinated implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels, the Group of 77 and China continues to stress the need to ensure a strong and direct link between coordination and development effectiveness. The outcome of increased coordination should be tangible and measurable development results where they matter most. We should therefore place priority on monitoring results at the country level.

We remain convinced that the United Nations is the best intergovernmental forum for advancing the development agenda and for facilitating the full realization of all internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. On the very important factor of policy coherence, the United Nations, through the Economic and Social Council, has a key role to play in ensuring that the policies of developed countries and international institutional partners are coherent and consistent with development goals and objectives of developing countries, particularly policies on trade, finance, intellectual property and the transfer of technology. Such inconsistencies should be the subject and object of deliberations of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, so that they may be identified and corrected.

The Group of 77 and China reiterates that securing real progress on MDG 8, on the global partnership for development must become a priority. The importance of benchmarks, and targets under MDG 8 cannot be overemphasized, as global partnership is necessary to achieve all internationally

agreed development goals and the MDGs. The General Assembly should make this message abundantly clear.

Additionally, there remain many challenges to the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance activities, both in natural disaster situations and in complex emergencies. These include addressing such situations in a timely, safe and effective manner. A single natural disaster can set back development progress in a developing country by several decades, accentuating poverty and economic vulnerabilities. For these reasons, it is critical that affected States, donor countries, the United Nations system and other humanitarian organizations coordinate to provide the much-needed humanitarian assistance and development support while recognizing the primary role of the affected State and fully respecting General Assembly resolution 46/182.

In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China hopes that the international community and development partners will take urgent measures to address the significant and debilitating implementation gaps identified in several areas, in particular in technology transfer, food security, agriculture and rural development, trade policies including agricultural subsidies, debt and official development assistance.

I wish now to take this opportunity to introduce the two draft resolutions that are before the Assembly. The first is the draft resolution contained in document A/63/L.15, entitled "Commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development".

Next year, 2009, will mark the fifteenth anniversary of that landmark international conference on population and development, which was held in Cairo. Fifteen years later, the international community is well poised to note achievements, assess progress and identify shortfalls in the achievement of International Conference on Population and Development goals. In this regard, I am pleased to introduce, on behalf of the Member States that are members of the Group of 77 and China, the draft resolution contained in document A/63/L.15, entitled "Commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development". The draft resolution proposes that the General Assembly devote one day during its sixty-fourth session to a commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development. The Group thanks all delegations for their support of this draft resolution and looks forward to a fitting commemoration of the International Conference on Population and Development plus 15.

Permit me now to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/63/L.14 entitled "Smoke-free United Nations premises". By its decision 2008/231, the Economic and Social Council recommended that the General Assembly, at its sixty-third session, consider the recommendation set out in Council resolution 2006/42 of 27 July 2006 on the implementation of a complete ban on smoking on all United Nations indoor premises, at Headquarters as well as at regional and country offices throughout the United Nations system, and the implementation of a complete ban on sales of tobacco products on all United Nations premises.

In this regard, I am pleased to introduce, on behalf of the Member States that are members of the Group of 77 and China, draft resolution A/63/L.14, entitled "Smoke-free United Nations premises". The Group thanks the many delegations that have participated in the consultations on this resolution, especially the delegation of Uruguay for conducting those consultations on behalf of the Group. We are heartened by the overwhelming support among all States for this resolution, and we look forward to its adoption by consensus.

Before action is taken on the draft, there is one small correction to be made. In operative paragraph 3, the words "the measures for" should be inserted after "report on". Paragraph 3 should now read:

> "Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session a report on the measures for the implementation of the present resolution."

Finally, the Group of 77 and China looks forward to adoption by consensus of both draft resolutions, and we thank all delegations for their support.

Mr. Delacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union on agenda item 40, on the report of the Economic and Social Council. The countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro; Iceland, member of the European Free Trade Association and

the European Economic Area; and Ukraine and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

The European Union thanks the Secretary-General for his report on the activities of the Economic and Social Council (A/63/3). We would also like to congratulate the President of the Council, Ambassador Mérorès, for the great expertise and benevolent authority with which he steered the Council's work in the last few months. The European Union takes this opportunity to renew its support for the Economic and Social Council. The recent introduction of the annual ministerial review and the holding this year of the first Development Cooperation Forum have had a very positive impact in terms of strengthening the Council, in line with the desire expressed by the heads of State and Government at the World Summit in September 2005.

The first Forum took place during the Council's high-level segment and was able to play an important role as a setting for constructive dialogue within the United Nations on the key issues of cooperation and development, including South-South cooperation and aid effectiveness. It facilitated the review of trends in international development cooperation, the identification of gaps and the making of recommendations to formulate and implement national development strategies. The European Union is convinced that the Forum can make a key contribution in its capacity as a preferred entity for examining aid architecture, encouraging dialogue and strengthening coordination among all relevant actors, including emerging donors, particularly to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

In order to boost the Forum's efficiency and allow interactive discussion on cooperation and development issues, the European Union believes that two or three specific themes should be identified, which would enable the Forum to draw up a factual assessment, highlight the elements of coordination to be improved and identify best practices on the ground.

The role of the Development Cooperation Forum was recognized in the Accra Agenda for Action on aid effectiveness, and we hope it will contribute to international dialogue and mutual accountability on the issues related to aid, in the spirit of the global partnership to which the European Union is particularly committed.

The role of the Annual Ministerial Review held during the Council's high-level segment is also very important. The European Union supports its goal of reviewing progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of conferences and summits and their follow-up processes. It welcomes the smooth running of the second session of that voluntary exercise, on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development", which contributed to the formulation of lessons learned and best practices on that issue.

The European Union will be just as mobilized for the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review, which will focus on the theme of "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health". The European Union stresses in this regard that its States members rank among the largest contributors to the health-related activities of the United Nations system, in particular the World Health Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It also welcomes the contribution of developing countries in presenting lessons learned from their progress in implementing internationally agreed development goals. In that regard, it recalls the need to maintain an appropriate balance between the numbers of developing and developed countries that volunteer for national voluntary presentations. That balance must take into account their respective representation in the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations.

The European Union considers further reform of the Economic and Social Council's working methods to be paramount in view of enabling the Council to refocus on its core functions and to assume its full role of guiding and coordinating international action in the economic, social and environmental arenas. In particular, the European Union believes that an even better organized and focused substantive session would clearly be a guarantee of coherence and effectiveness.

Finally, the European Union would like to reiterate the importance that it accords to achieving increased coordination and complementarity among United Nations activities, in particular as regards the necessary links between the work undertaken by the Economic and Social Council and that of funds and programmes, between the Council's work and that of the General Assembly.

Ms. González (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): In the context of the consideration of the report of the Economic and Social Council and draft resolution A/63/L.14, on a smoke-free United Nations premises, Uruguay's delegation wishes to align itself with the statement of the Group of 77 and China. My delegation wishes to reiterate once more its support for the draft resolution on smoke-free premises, a continuation of the work initiated by the Economic and Social Council in July with the adoption of decision 2008/231, which recommended that the General Assembly implement the Council's resolution 2006/42 of 27 July 2006.

My country attaches particular importance to that issue. For that reason, we have made a firm commitment to anti-tobacco policies, at the international level, by ratifying the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and also at the national level, by implementing correspondent policies that seek to improve the well-being of its population. In 2006 my country became the first in Latin America to be totally free of tobacco smoking in closed public areas.

In that regard, we feel it is appropriate to recall that the consumption of tobacco is unquestionably a risk factor for health and a cause of death, in addition to being associated with all sorts of diseases ranging from cancer to cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases, as noted by the report submitted to the Economic and Social Council by the United Nations Ad Hoc Interagency Task Force on Tobacco Control.

Tobacco affects not only smokers. Second-hand smoke is damaging to health. Our delegation believes it is the responsibility of all in the Organization to protect against exposure to tobacco smoke in public places, especially in indoor work spaces and closed public premises. The majority of States Members of the Organization have adopted and encouraged smoke-free policies, and the United Nations and Governments should set an example in public health. Reducing the smoking areas in the workplace protects staff members and delegates from involuntary exposure to smoke and aids smokers in reducing their daily consumption. In view of these facts, we believe that the Organization should act and it is thus essential that the General Assembly take prompt action on this matter so that we can have a smoke-free United Nations.

Mr. Alimov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to thank the President of the Economic and Social Council for his very informative presentation of the Council's report (A/63/3). I would also like to convey our gratitude to the Secretariat for ensuring the Council's ability to work effectively during the course of this year.

The Russian delegation has consistently championed the strengthening of the role of the Council within the framework of the United Nations development system and the global economic architecture as a whole. We view the Council as one of the leading platforms within the framework of the universal Organization to seek compromise solutions to the most pressing socio-economic problems of today, including re-emerging threats and challenges to consistent sustainable development. The Council's updated, more flexible and more focused format and its demonstrated ability to rapidly respond to new threats and challenges have provided the Council with the opportunity to become one of the most utilized mechanisms for multilateral cooperation for development, including in the context of the task of overcoming the global financial crisis.

The successful conduct of the second annual ministerial review of the progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and of the first full-scale Development Cooperation Forum allow us to speak of the Council as having fully achieved its intended operational level in implementing its mandate as the main body in the United Nations system ensuring coordination of multilateral efforts aimed at achieving the MDGs. Of special importance here was the Development Cooperation Forum. In our view, the Forum, on the whole, discharged its main function to serve as a universal platform for equal partnership dialogue on issues of development with the participation of as broad a range of partners as possible, including civil society and the private sector. A priority task is the search for the best work format for the Forum to enable it to genuinely promote greater agreement on and the effectiveness of development processes. The interactive discussion within the framework of the Forum must be targeted at elaborating concrete recommendations and compromise decisions, which may serve as the foundations of future intergovernmental agreements.

One of the ways to strengthen the role of the Council is the more effective use of the potential of the Council's annual sessions to implement its coordination functions. We believe that the

coordination segment should become the main platform for a practical, focused and grounded consideration of the issues of the work of regional and functional commissions of the Council, including the format for the dialogue with their Executive Directors, as well as the topic of the comprehensive implementation of the decisions of major United Nations summits and conferences in the field of economics.

We welcome the outcomes of the operational segment of the session, whose work is of major importance from the point of view of implementing agreements achieved within the framework of triennial reviews of substantive activities, which give the United Nations practical policy guidance in the field of cooperation for development and which turn United Nations programmes of work and funds at the country level.

The humanitarian segment confirmed the growing importance of a timely and appropriate response to natural disasters of increasing frequency and severity. The Council fully retains its role as the main platform of work within the framework of the United Nations for consideration of humanitarian issues. We are, however, forced to note that the fact that the Council had to vote on a humanitarian resolution this session — the first time in its history — creates a very dangerous precedent and points to an undesirable trend towards the politicization of humanitarian issues at the United Nations. The Council should continue to play a role in considerations aimed at finding responses to such global challenges threatening progress in achieving the MDGs, such as the food crisis. We back the efforts of the United Nations system to overcome it. We believe that the Rome Declaration and the Comprehensive Framework for Action worked out by the High-level Task Force can serve as a sound basis for consolidating the efforts of the international community in this area.

The high-level segment of the upcoming the Council session, will, as is well known, be devoted to assessing progress in the implementation of objectives and obligations agreed at an international level in the field of health. The President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session of has declared the topic of global health as one of his priorities. Russia supports increased attention devoted to health issues on the Organization's agenda. However, we urge that their consideration in various United Nations forums over the coming year should take place in a consistent, coherent manner following a single line of logic, and with consideration by the Council as a central element. We expect that the organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations, coordinated by the Council, will, in a timely fashion, start preparations for Council sessions, including at a regional level. Russia is ready for constructive cooperation in this field with all interested partners.

Mr. Voto-Bernales (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to express my thanks for the report introduced by the distinguished representative of Haiti, Mr. Mérorès, and to pay tribute to his skilful guidance of the Economic and Social Council as its President.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Two years have elapsed since the adoption of resolution 61/16 on strengthening the Economic and Social Council, which established, among other things, two elements that my delegation regards as fundamental to improving the work of the Council: on one hand, substantive annual reviews at the ministerial level and, on the other, the Development Cooperation Forum.

We welcome the holding in July of the first meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum, at which time the President of the Council said that the launching of the Forum was a significant milestone in the implementation of the global partnership for development as, for the first time, international development cooperation issues as such will be discussed under the aegis of the United Nations by the Economic and Social Council in order to strengthen the impact of cooperation for development.

In this regard, I would like to underscore a number of points that we regard as key for this work to proceed effectively. The Forum should further strengthen the voice of all those concerned, including civil society, parliamentarians, the private sector and local government, through support for high-level dialogue on the main issues of cooperation for development. Due consideration must be given to the broad range of topics affecting the efficiency of cooperation for development, such as climate change, food security and policy coherence. The Forum should continue to provide independent high-quality analysis on the topic of cooperation to ensure a broad and inclusive international debate on that agenda. The

Forum should play a key role as an international mechanism for accountability, bringing together analysis of progress achieved on the national and global levels as related to the topic of mutual accountability, thus contributing to donor-beneficiary coordination.

Another key event at the July meeting was the thematic debate entitled "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development, taking into account current challenges", at which my country raised a number of points that it would like to reiterate in this forum.

Like climate change, protection of biodiversity is a long-term global issue that is not being handled effectively and is closely associated with sustainable development. In that regard, we need to heighten awareness of the problem and increase the number of international programmes promoting technical and financial assistance for the protection of biodiversity.

The rules and incentives established by markets in the developed countries to mitigate the effects of climate change can at times hamper some exports from developing countries. For that reason, technical and financial assistance is needed, so that the developing countries can upgrade their manufacturing plants, so as to comply with those new and more stringent requirements.

The current regimes of intellectual property rights need to be reviewed to take into account the interests of developing countries. We are particularly concerned about the protection of traditional knowledge.

In the private sector of developing countries, limited access to credit and technology can hinder investment in cleaner and more efficient production depending on resources and the establishment of new companies that contribute to sustainable development. In that regard, we must support not only the large corporations, but also individual initiatives and small business, which is essential to developing countries.

As a result, we underscore the importance of initiatives, such as that of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, co-chaired by the former Secretary of State of the United States of America, Ms. Madeleine Albright, and Mr. Hernando de Soto, who delivered the report of the Commission on 3 June 2008 and to which we believe all necessary support should be offered.

Just 10 days ago, thanks to the endorsement of our region, my country had the honour to be elected as a member of the Council for the period 2009 to 2010. We are excited to return to the Economic and Social Council, since the work of that body relates closely to the outlook and priorities of Peru's foreign policy.

Together with the impetus given to economic growth by investment and the generation of employment — goals towards which we are working hard — fighting against poverty and exclusion is currently probably the most daunting challenge of Peru's national and foreign policies. We are convinced that the dignity of the human being and his well-being lie at the core of our concerns.

In that regard, I would like to put forward two brief thoughts of a general nature about the work of the Council.

First, we need to refocus the work of the Council. As His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI pointed out when he last addressed the General Assembly: "The founding principles of the Organization ... express the just aspirations of the human spirit and constitute the ideals which should underpin international relations" (*A/62/PV.95, p. 3*). In that regard, the work of the Council should focus on the human being and make the individual the core of its actions and the purpose of all goals.

Secondly, to put it plainly, we believe that we need more action and less rhetoric. It is not so much a question of creating new commitments as fulfilling those already made. That needs the establishment of flexible and effective follow-up mechanisms in all the Council's areas of activity.

Mr. Sen (India): I am grateful for the opportunity to express our views on the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2008 (A/63/3). India attaches great importance to the work of the Economic and Social Council, and believes that its strengthened structure will assist in better discharging its role as the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development. We underline the importance of the new mandate, given to the Council in 2006, to undertake a regular and periodic review and assessment of international economic and development policies and their impact on development. We support the Development Cooperation Forum as a key body in

overseeing trends in international development cooperation.

Insofar as the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2008 is concerned, we would like to comment on the report of the Statistical Commission on its thirty-ninth session (E/2008/24), which was considered by the Economic and Social Council during its 2008 substantive session. While the Statistical Commission was asked merely to look at the indicators for the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we would like to reiterate our position and place on record that we do not agree with the change in targets effected last year by the United Nations Secretariat, particularly the transfer of a target from Goal 8 to Goal 1. Such actions, without the approval of Member States, are arbitrary and misrepresent the decision taken at the 2005 World Summit Outcome. Further, those actions weaken the monitoring of MDG 8 and are against the spirit of the global partnership for development. We would therefore urge the Statistical Commission to focus particularly on that aspect during its fortieth session.

Mr. Murakami (Japan): Today, it is my pleasure to share Japan's position under agenda item 40, on the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/63/3), and agenda item 44, on integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields (A/63/83).

First of all, I would like to express my delegation's sincere gratitude to the Secretariat for providing those reports. I would also like to join previous speakers in praising Ambassador Mérorès, President of the Economic and Social Council, for his skilful and successful leadership of the Council this year.

On 22 October, with the endorsement of the regional group, Japan was re-elected a member of the Economic and Social Council for the term from 2009 to 2011. My delegation would like to express its sincere gratitude to all the Member States that supported our re-election. We are committed to continue playing an active and constructive role in the deliberations of the Council.

Japan attaches great importance to the activities of the Economic and Social Council. During the high-level segment of the substantive session this year, the then Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Yasuhide Nakayama, declared that Japan supported the efforts to strengthen the Council, including the establishment of the Development Cooperation Forum. Japan not only financially supported the preparation process of this year's Economic and Social Council, but also sent panellists to its meetings to share their views.

Japan has announced its intention to make a national voluntary presentation at next year's annual ministerial review in Geneva. Under the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health", Japan will present its unique experience in enhancing public health domestically, as well as its recent role as a strong advocate for the promotion of global health.

The high-level meeting on Africa's development needs and the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals in September provided an ideal opportunity for world leaders to send a strong message that we should act together to make strong efforts for the development of Africa and the achievement of the MDGs. For its part, Japan placed the MDGs at the top of the agenda at the two important summits it hosted earlier this year, namely, the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) and the Group of Eight (G-8) Summit.

The fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which took place in Yokohama in May this year, was co-organized by Japan, the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. Representatives of 51 African countries, including 41 leaders, along with other donor countries and a wide range of international organizations, gathered to rally behind the theme "Toward a vibrant Africa", or, in French, "Vers une Afrique qui Gagne". They reaffirmed the importance of developing country ownership and international community partnership in advancing development. They also emphasized the need to accelerate broad-based economic growth, to ensure human security including achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the consolidation of peace and good governance and to address environmental issues and climate change.

At the Group of Eight (G-8) Hokkaido Toyako Summit in July, leaders declared that, in tackling the MDG agenda, they would work to improve human security through the protection and empowerment of individuals and communities. In its discussions, the G-8

focused on the areas of health, water and sanitation, and education. In the field of global health, the G-8 emphasized the importance of pursuing a comprehensive approach in order to strengthen health systems, improve maternal, newborn and child health and combat infectious diseases. At the successful MDG Partnership event on water and sanitation on 24 September, Japan announced its determination to put even greater effort into enhancing good water cycle management. With regard to education, Japan emphasizes the importance of improving both the quality and quantity of basic education as well as of developing a well balanced and holistic education system, including secondary, higher and technical and vocational education and training. All of these policies came with specific commitments, which Japan announced earlier this year and reiterated at the high-level event on the MDGs. Japan is determined to work steadfastly in order to fulfil these commitments.

In the fight against climate change, the G-8 leaders sought to share with all parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change the vision of the goal of achieving a reduction of at least 50 per cent in global emissions by 2050. They also emphasized the importance of midterm goals and national plans, and shared the view that sectoral approaches are useful tools for achieving national emission reduction objectives.

Japan stands ready to continue to provide leadership towards the eradication of poverty and the achievement of sustained economic growth through the enhancement of human security. My delegation hopes that fruitful discussions at the United Nations will lead to concrete actions towards the achievement of these goals.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): At the outset, allow me to express some words of appreciation to the President of the Economic and Social Council for his report and to the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/16".

We believe that the progress made in the implementation of resolution 61/16 since its adoption is accurately reflected in the report. The report contains a number of important recommendations for further action to promote an integrated and coordinated approach to the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in economic, social and related fields. It concerns, first of all, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), namely, poverty eradication, sustained economic growth and sustainable development. We should realize that our eventual success in attaining those goals will be achieved through cross-sectoral interaction, as well as through the mobilization of resources and maximization of support from various constituencies in the development process.

The delegation of Kazakhstan would like, in particular, to emphasize the role of the General Assembly in ensuring overall monitoring and oversight of the implementation of decisions taken in global multilateral forums. We note with satisfaction that, in accordance with the relevant recommendations of resolution 61/16, the Economic and Social Council was strengthened during the reporting period in its role as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination of the process of integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

As a member of the Economic and Social Council, Kazakhstan would like to note that the Council successfully finalized its multi-year programme of work based on a focused and balanced list of cross-sectoral thematic issues common to the outcomes of global multilateral events. The multi-year work programme is helping the Council to achieve greater coherence and effectiveness in the exercise of its managerial and coordination responsibilities.

The new Economic and Social Council functions, such as the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum, constitute the central pillars of a revitalized Council and have been significant strides in positioning the Council as the principal forum for global dialogue and reviewing policy regarding the effectiveness and coherence of international development cooperation. The results of the various conferences and follow-up processes are brought together in an integrated manner at the annual ministerial review. This year, during the second annual ministerial review, Kazakhstan conducted its national voluntary presentation on its progress in the implementation of the MDGs. During the preparatory process, which gave the Kazakhstan Government the

opportunity to once again look critically at the progress made towards attaining the MDGs, national MDG benchmarks were set, higher than those agreed upon at the global level. In this regard, my delegation would like to express deep gratitude to experts from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and to the Council secretariat for providing technical assistance in the course of those preparations for the presentation.

The first ever Development Cooperation Forum brought together representatives from Governments, the private sector, intergovernmental organizations and academia to discuss technical aspects of development cooperation issues. It was truly a historic session, which implemented the new functions of the Council in their entirety. Further evidence of the Council's leadership role in the development area is the launch, during the previous session of the Council, of the global debate on the consequences of economic insecurity caused by the overlapping food, fuel and financial crises, in search of an appropriate response. This is a truly global forum in which the world can unite in order to, among other things, reinvent the global financial architecture.

We welcome the ongoing involvement of functional and regional commissions in the review of their working methods, priorities and programmes, taking into account the multi-year work programme of the annual ministerial review, in order to better pursue the implementation of the outcomes of various global events. Recognizing the instrumental role of regional commissions in maintaining the focus on the implementation of the outcomes of the various conferences within their respective purviews, my delegation calls on member States to support the proposal to open sub-regional offices of regional commissions, particularly the joint office of the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in North Central Asia, which will bring the Council closer to beneficiary countries.

One of the central events of this year in the United Nations was the high-level event in the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals to assess the achievements made at the midpoint towards 2015.

In view of the slowdown in the process of implementing the MDGs within the defined time frame, governments and business and civil society partners made new commitments in the amount of $16 billion to help meet the MDGs. Implementation of additional development programmes will require additional efforts by development partners.

Therefore, we encourage the Economic and Social Council, its functional and regional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies to gear their deliberations and workplans towards making significant contributions to that process. This concerns primarily the Economic and Social Council high-level segment with the Bretton Woods institutions in 2009, periodic sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the review meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Social Development. We also hope that the outcome of the Doha Round of negotiations at the end of this month will contribute to accelerating progress towards the development goals.

My delegation would like to reiterate Kazakhstan's adherence to its commitments to the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. We also express our conviction that the Economic and Social Council, as one of the main organs of the United Nations, should continue to play a critical role in ensuring steady progress towards forging a global partnership for development.

Ms. Legarda (Philippines): I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Philippines and to state for the record that the Philippines aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Philippines also wishes to commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on agenda item 44, entitled "Role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/16" (A/63/83).

As an immediate past Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, the Philippines has been in the privileged position of actively participating in the revitalization of that important organ of the United Nations. In the same manner, it continues to contribute to the work of the various functional Commissions of which it is a member.

On substantive matters, the Economic and Social Council annual ministerial review's focus this year on sustainable development showed much overlap with the Philippines' positions on cross-cutting issues such as the food crisis, climate change and the gender gap, which were reported on during the Commission on Sustainable Development's meeting last May — all aspects of which add to the challenges already faced by developing countries in meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

The Philippines has taken the position that greater focus should be concentrated on adaptation than on mitigation. Adapting to climate change requires reducing underlying vulnerabilities, building response capacities and managing climate risks. Two weeks ago, parliamentarians from countries vulnerable to climate change gathered in a consultative meeting in Manila, Philippines, and came up with The Manila Call for Action of Parliamentarians on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation. This representative was privileged to be a co-convener with the United Nations Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The Philippines, together with those countries will also look into compliance by our respective Governments with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, the guide for effective disaster reduction at the national level, which 168 countries adopted in 2005.

It is now high time to review legislative progress pursuant to the Hyogo Framework for Action, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Bali Action Plan. Accordingly, the Philippine reiterates the parliamentarians' entreaty to the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to commence the process of transforming the Hyogo Framework for Action into an internationally binding legal instrument. The Philippines is convinced that that would strengthen our commitments and ensure the realization of the goals and objectives of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

The Economic and Social Council special meeting on the global food crisis was one of the very first discussions on the problem and one that led to the high-level meeting in Rome and the eventual finalization of the Comprehensive Framework for Action.

Whereas 30 years ago we were one of the biggest exporters of rice, we are now one of the world's largest importers of rice and the Philippines remains critically engaged in efforts concerning the food crisis. During the meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Philippines highlighted the fact that the World Economic Forum ranked the Philippines as the only Asian country in the top ten on the global gender gap index — an achievement that reflects progress in narrowing the gender gap. However, that is not reflective of the vulnerability faced by women in the face of the current global financial crisis.

On procedural matters, it has become apparent that all of the major global crises that have made the headlines over the past year — the food and fuel crises, climate change and environmental degradation and most recently, the financial crisis — are within the purview of the Economic and Social Council. Those crises pose grave threats to the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals and in particular the Millennium Development Goals.

The number and severity of the global crises challenge the United Nations system and challenge all United Nations Member States as well, in terms of trying to find quick, coherent, comprehensive and coordinated responses to the multidimensional and often interrelated effects of those problems.

The Philippines supports taking a closer look at the utility of reporting triennially on efforts to reduce the amount of work that may not have any useful outcome.

Finally, on a personal note and speaking as a member of the Philippine Senate — the Upper House of the Congress of the Philippines — let me underscore the report's recommendation on the conduct of the Economic and Social Council Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) that,

> "The inclusion of civil society organizations, parliamentarians as well as local government and private sector representatives provides for a unique opportunity to garner a wide range of inputs for a deepened dialogue on the future of international development cooperation." (*A/63/83, para. 68*)

There is much merit in that recommendation. I believe that the development pillar of the United Nations must be pushed forward on the basis of a multi-stakeholder approach, as it is only in that manner that we can actually ensure that policy recommendations,

negotiated resolutions and programme implementation can have any real meaning to the ordinary person.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): This year has been a difficult one for the international community. The weakness of existing coordinating mechanisms for economic development at an international level has led to the emergence of a multifaceted global crisis in energy, food and finance. Countering that crisis, as shown by the results of the interactive discussion of 30 October, will be impossible without radical reform of the existing system of international financial institutions, in whose activities the principles of the free market often take precedence over ensuring the sustainable development of individual States and the conditions for sustainable development of the global economy as a whole.

In that respect, we should welcome the efforts of the Economic and Social Council to conduct a review of the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the convening in 2008 of a series of special sessions and meetings with the participation of the heads of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. Those events allowed us to better understand the nature of those crises, identify their origins and forecast their short and midterm impacts on various States. We believe that the practice of convening such events should continue.

Belarus has consistently advocated enhancing the role of the Economic and Social Council as a specialized body to resolve global economic problems. Similar to the Security Council, which is a body whose mission is to respond to threats and challenges to international peace and security, the Economic and Social Council must become the centre for coordination of the international community's efforts to respond to global challenges in its area of competence. In that respect, we believe that the Economic and Social Council should, as rapidly as possible, convene a high-level meeting to consider ways to overcome the financial crisis. We welcome that the Development Cooperation Forum and the annual ministerial review have been mainstreamed into the activities of the Economic and Social Council. However, further steps in that direction will be needed.

The questions of assistance to middle-income countries should be included in the framework of the fight against the consequences of the financial crisis. We call upon the international community to step up international cooperation in providing that group of States with technical assistance, in order to provide them with the broadest possible capacity to independently elaborate and implement sound and effective strategies for their development.

Mrs. Wahab (Indonesia): Indonesia would like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports contained in documents A/63/3 and A/63/83. We also join previous speakers in thanking the President of the Economic and Social Council for his leadership.

Indonesia also aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Indonesia welcomes the General Assembly's continued focus on integrated and coordinated implementation of, and follow-up to, the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. As emphasized in paragraph 151 of the World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), the General Assembly should strengthen its relationship with other principal organs to ensure better coordination. In paragraph 155 of the same document, the Economic and Social Council was called upon to ensure follow-up of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the internationally agreed development goals.

The Economic and Social Council's launch of the annual ministerial review and Development Cooperation Forum in 2007 contributed to those interrelated objectives. The annual ministerial review and Development Cooperation Forum are important to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations system and its impact on development. More importantly, both forums bridge the divide between the normative and operational work of the United Nations. That thus helps close the implementation gap.

The measure of success for both entities rests on two achievements. First is their impact in enhancing the integration of the international development agenda in the programmes of work of United Nations system entities. Second is their effectiveness in providing coherent support to the implementation of national strategies.

In that connection, Indonesia is pleased that a multi-year programme of work has been adopted for the annual ministerial review. Organizing a different

thematic area each year provides a clear structure for the deliberations. Furthermore, it facilitates better assessment of the role of the annual ministerial review. It also mobilizes the engagement of the functional commissions.

Likewise, the first biennial meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum in New York this year also provided clear policy direction regarding the Doha Review Conference and the 3rd High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held at Accra.

Those measures, in Indonesia's view, provide a constructive contribution to the Council's role as the principal body overseeing the overall implementation of the internationally agreed development goals.

In the implementation of the multi-year programme of work of the annual ministerial review, Indonesia commends the programmatic contributions of the functional commissions in regard to the themes. Their input towards this year's annual ministerial review theme, "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development", showed their commitment to this process. It is commendable that their efforts are being attuned to current challenges. The particular focus in most of the commissions in regard to climate change is encouraging.

It is important that the regional commissions continue to contribute the efforts of their member States to meeting the internationally agreed development goals. The regional commissions need to align their programmes of work with regional priority areas. Therefore, strengthening their capacities by working together with the Secretariat's Department of Economic and Social Affairs becomes imperative.

While acknowledging the positive developments of the Economic and Social Council, we cannot fall into complacency. It is important to continually promote policy coherence at all levels. The link between the global policy debate and national activities should be strengthened.

At the international level, the contribution of the functional commissions is still ad hoc. There needs to be a clear and systematic way of contributing to the annual ministerial review while not overlooking the priorities of their respective programmes of work. Likewise, the United Nations system's current effort to enhance coordination through closer interaction between the Economic and Social Council, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, the newly constituted Chief Executives Board structure and the executive boards of the funds and programmes could help ensure effective support for the implementation of conference commitments.

At the national level, the effort of the United Nations through the "One United Nations" approach is a positive step towards integrated follow-up of the United Nations conferences and summits. We should build on the lessons learned. In terms of reporting, the recommendation to triennialize the report on the integrated follow-up merits further consideration. However, it may be more valuable to follow the timing of the current Economic and Social Council restructuring. It is worth considering biennial reports to conform with the work of the Development Cooperation Forum and to ensure timely assessments.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda items 40 and 44.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/63/L.14 and A/63/L.15.

We turn first to draft resolution A/63/L.14, entitled "Smoke-free United Nations premises". I draw the attention of the members to the fact that the asterisk in the line of sponsors should appear after Antigua and Barbuda. That correction, where necessary, will be reflected in the addendum to the document.

Before proceeding to take action on draft resolution A/63/L.14, I should like to announce that since the introduction of the draft resolution the following countries have become sponsors: Argentina, Finland, France, Ireland, Israel, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.14?

Draft resolution A/63/L.14 was adopted (resolution 63/8).

The Acting President: We turn next to draft resolution A/63/L.15, entitled "Commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development".

Before proceeding to take action on draft resolution A/63/L.15, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.15?

Draft resolution A/63/L.15 was adopted (resolution 63/9).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 40 and 44.

Agenda item 114

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(a) Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(b) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.7)

(c) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(d) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.9)

(e) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(f) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(g) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.12)

(h) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States

(i) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(j) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.13)

(k) Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(l) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(m) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

Draft resolution (A/63/L.10)

(n) Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(o) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/63/155)

(p) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

(q) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States

(r) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(s) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(t) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/63/156)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.11)

(u) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Mr. Tóth (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): I have the honour to report today on the status of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and on the progress achieved by the Treaty's Preparatory Commission. The CTBT is an essential pillar of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It was built on strong foundations and it continues to grow in strength every year.

The history of the United Nations and the General Assembly cannot be written without mentioning the efforts that have been made, and continue to be made, to secure international peace and security. These efforts have gone hand in hand with significant attempts to control and one day eliminate from our lives the imposing reality of nuclear weapons.

The comprehensive ban on nuclear weapon testing that was negotiated by the Conference on Disarmament in the 1990s and the subsequent efforts to prepare for that ban reach back to the very first resolution of this Assembly. In January 1946, the Assembly's first session adopted resolution 1(I): "Establishment of a Commission to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy". The Commission was given the task of making specific proposals on the exchange of scientific information for peaceful ends, the control of atomic energy to ensure its use for peaceful purposes, the elimination of atomic weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and the provision of effective safeguards to protect States against the hazards of violations and evasions.

In the course of the 62 sessions of the Assembly and the 62 years that have followed, many noble and effective proposals have been made and implemented. The CTBT, with its ban on nuclear testing, its comprehensive and global verification regime and its open dissemination of the scientific and technical information gathered is one endeavour that has met that early Commission's terms of reference in full.

In its most basic form, the CTBT is a ban on all nuclear testing, for all people, for all time. The Treaty foresees the establishment of a global and democratic verification regime to monitor compliance with the Treaty's provisions. In 1996, the year the Treaty was opened for signature, a Preparatory Commission was established to build the verification regime in anticipation of the Treaty's entry into force, while at the same time promoting the Treaty and its principles so that the system could one day be put to work properly.

But, in fact, the verification system has already been put to a test. Two years ago, I stood before the Assembly in the shadow of reports that the then eight-year moratorium on nuclear weapon testing — the longest silence in the history of nuclear weapon explosions — had been broken. The announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it had conducted a nuclear test on 9 October 2006 cut to the core of the CTBT's purpose and mandate.

I reported to the Assembly then on the challenge that event posed for the nascent verification regime and how it met this challenge successfully when it detected the event and attributed it to the Democratic People's Republic. That event was some 20 times smaller in yield than the nuclear explosion that took place over Hiroshima.

At a time when the verification regime was in provisional operation and the International Monitoring System was only half complete, it was an unwelcome challenge. But the silver lining was that the Treaty's verification regime proved itself and has since spurred its members to greater action.

At the request of the Secretary-General, the United Nations system is undertaking significant efforts to present to the international community a coordinated and effective approach to addressing the challenge of climate change. The Preparatory Commission, with its cutting edge technical and scientific capabilities, may have a substantial contribution to make to this effort.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) is uniquely placed for this task, with an international monitoring system spanning the globe and observing the atmosphere, oceans, landmasses and all that rests between. The purpose of this wide-scale environmental monitoring is to ensure compliance with the Treaty's provisions. But, by its very nature, it can be adapted for other purposes.

In the past two years alone, the system has grown exponentially, and 70 per cent of the 337 facilities to be built across the territories of 89 countries are complete. The global communications infrastructure — the communications lifeline supporting the system and comprising 250 terminals networking the globe — has been completely revamped just in the past 12 months. The existing system, with the multiplicity of technologies it supports, could prove a highly effective and efficient means of generating valuable climate-related information directly.

The network could also potentially support sensors co-located with our monitoring facilities and targeted specifically at the global climate change problem. Approximately $1 billion have been invested in the system by its members over more than a decade. The system is truly unprecedented in its global reach, with facilities located in some of the harshest yet most relevant environments. This is a significant asset of the international community, one that has definite potential to help us address global climate change issues successfully.

There are other potential civil and scientific applications to which the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty's verification regime can be put to use. As we have developed and improved the system, interest in it has grown. That interest has led to other avenues for which the data we are generating can be put to use, such as tsunami warning alerts. People naturally want the best and we can provide the fastest, most reliable and highest quality data.

Following extensive cooperation with UNESCO, agreements for the provision of data for tsunami warning purposes have recently been signed with institutions in Australia, Japan and the Philippines. More are to follow with Indonesia and other countries. Important life-saving applications of the Treaty's verification regime are already being put to use. Plenty more could follow.

A great distance has been travelled by the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization since I last stood before you. In the changing global context of the twenty-first century, this Treaty is now more necessary than ever. A verification regime, unprecedented in scope and ambition, is coming to life. As we assemble here today, it is waiting. It is a massive human and financial investment, a great endeavour of scientists and Governments alike, waiting to enter into full operation because that is what it was built to do and that is what it stands ready to do.

However, all of this is for naught if we cannot bring this Treaty into force. The Preparatory Commission is now a 180-member-strong organization. We are five ratifications away from crossing the 150-ratifications barrier. It would seem that all roads lead to the universalization of the CTBT and its principles. And yet, because of the Treaty's own built-in mechanisms, there are still nine countries whose ratification is necessary for this Treaty to enter into force. Consequently, we are kept at the gate.

I say that this Treaty is now more necessary than ever. This is not simply rhetoric. Gaps have developed in the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. In the barriers erected to protect us from nuclear weapons, we are not living up to the resolve with which our predecessors first convened, united in their common aim of delivering us from the threat posed by the discovery of atomic energy. We have lost the sense of urgency.

When we consider the myriad challenges before us today, the argument for establishing this Treaty immediately in the international rule book proves more compelling than ever.

Concerns about energy security are moving alternative energy solutions to the forefront. So too is the potential threat posed by climate change, as its effects become more apparent in our daily lives. The potential resurgence of nuclear energy rests at the crux of these two defining issues on the international agenda. Nuclear energy may well be about to witness a renaissance.

Such a resurgence will almost certainly lead to an increase in the number of countries, facilities, institutions and individuals managing sensitive components of the nuclear fuel cycle. Such a surge across the board will make it more difficult than ever

to differentiate between prohibited and permitted nuclear activities. We are moving in a direction where the choice between nuclear energy for peaceful purposes or nuclear energy for weapons will be based more on political grounds than on technical ones.

As nuclear energy is promoted to address energy security and climate change challenges, this promotion must go hand in hand with a strengthening of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime — a regime that has been weakened in recent years. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is the last and most visible legal and technical barrier to the development of nuclear weapons. It can keep the disarmament and non-proliferation regime from unravelling, as we progress through the twenty-first century and attempt to navigate the compound challenges facing our world and as we learn the lessons of the current global economic crisis. These challenges must not be left unattended; they must not be left to unregulated competition and market forces for an adequate response; they require even more regulation than other volatile areas of our daily lives; they will not forgive complacency; and they must be faced promptly, decisively and collectively.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the efforts we are currently undertaking are steeped in the tradition of this body. That such tradition is important because it is the tradition of cooperation and collective responsibility. Nations assembled here 62 years ago and began that tradition in the General Assembly: to have disparate and diverse communities working together as one international community towards a common goal and with a common ownership of that enterprise and the fruits of that enterprise. Those efforts extend now to every outpost of human endeavour, including the exploitation of nuclear materials.

Undoubtedly, the most terrifying problem raised by the discovery of atomic energy was the realization of the capacity to destroy ourselves — to end human life on this planet. We are locked in a constant struggle to control that capacity, to see it diminish so that the positive applications of scientific thought and knowledge may flourish.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the global and democratic verification regime that it provides make us stronger. They give us the power to win that struggle. During the past 10 years the Treaty was repeatedly challenged by nuclear weapon tests and action putting at risk its eventual entry into force, and the number of ratifications grew from a mere 13 to nearly 150. During the same period a $1 billion verification regime was put in place. It happened not because of political myopia or abundance of resources. It happened because all those nearly 150 countries voted with their feet. It happened because all those countries put their money where their mouth is. It happened because they saw the clear and present difficulties but were determined to prevail.

The great act of this body, as it moves forward, must be to see the day when proposals to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy are no longer needed, because the problems have been solved and all that lies before us is opportunity and the freedom to pursue it in the absence of fear.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Mr. Rogelio Pfirter, to present the report of that organization.

Mr. Pfirter (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): I have the pleasure of addressing this Assembly under the agenda item entitled: "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons". Indeed, such cooperation is vital for peace and security through the promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation. In this common quest, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) plays its part by implementing its mandate of eliminating all declared chemical weapons and ensuring their non-proliferation through the tools of verification. The disarmament and non-proliferation regime established by the Convention has received consistent support both from the States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) as well as from the United Nations. This has strengthened the hard-won norms banning the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons.

The annual report of the activities and programmes of the OPCW on the implementation of the CWC in 2006 (see A/63/155) and the draft report for 2007 have already been circulated to the General Assembly. As part of the continuing cooperation between the OPCW and the United Nations, I also had the opportunity of informing the First Committee on 15 October about the current state of implementation

of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Last year, United Nations Member States signalled their overwhelming support for the Convention at the high-level meeting convened in these premises to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Convention's operation. It was gratifying to witness such strong commitment to the Convention and the work of the OPCW. The adoption each year of a consensus resolution by the United Nations General Assembly, reaffirming the importance of the Convention, represents another concrete manifestation of such continuing support.

This year, our States parties met for the second 5-year Review Conference and reaffirmed unanimously their conviction regarding the validity of the Convention's objectives in the context of the goals of peace and security. The Conference stressed in particular that the Convention sets new standards for global disarmament and non-proliferation through verification in a non-discriminatory and multilateral manner. While affirming the importance of completing chemical disarmament within the given deadlines, the Conference equally underscored the need to strengthen the non-proliferation aspects of the Convention. It emphasized, in this context, the importance of effective national implementation of the obligations of the Convention as a means to both deter and punish misuse of toxic chemicals for any unlawful purposes.

The second Review Conference also recognized the important role OPCW can play in support of internationally agreed action against international terrorism. In this framework, it recalled the decision adopted by the Executive Council in December 2001 stressing the effective implementation of all provisions of the Convention. I wish to underline that this is entirely consistent with the objectives of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and that the OPCW is fully cooperating with the United Nations to promote effective implementation of that resolution.

The success of the second Review Conference bears eloquent testimony to the foresight and wisdom of States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Thanks to this spirit, the Convention remains a comprehensive and effective disarmament and non-proliferation tool that has demonstrably made a significant difference in advancing a system of security based on respect for rules that apply to all uniformly, with verification as the watchword.

Allow me to summarize the progress that has been made in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. I will also touch upon our future challenges.

As of 30 September 2008, the OPCW had verified the destruction of more than 28,600 metric tons of Category 1 chemical weapons. This represents 41.25 per cent of the total stockpiles declared by six States parties. In the two years since I last addressed the General Assembly, the amount of chemical weapons that has been destroyed has doubled. Also in this time, two of the six declared possessor States have completely fulfilled their destruction obligations under the Convention. They are Albania and a State party. They deserve the appreciation of the international community for reaching these milestones. And so does India, which is close to reaching this landmark. But, of course, the time remaining to accomplish the total destruction of declared chemical weapons by all possessor States is also growing short and a significant amount still remains to be destroyed.

The major burden of these obligations rests with the Russian Federation and the United States. The Russian Federation has to date completed the destruction of more than 11,600 metric tons or 29 per cent of its Category 1 chemical weapons. The commissioning of new destruction facilities, as well as the construction of additional ones, is proceeding apace. The authorities in the Russian Federation have been very clear in their pledge to fulfil their obligations under the Convention, within its time frame and in the manner mandated by CWC, and, as stated in a recent report submitted by the Chairman of the OPCW's Executive Council, they are taking concrete steps to that end.

The United States of America has completed the destruction of nearly 15,400 metric tons or 55.4 per cent of its declared stockpiles. New destruction facilities are under construction, which will add to the existing capacity of the United States to destroy chemical weapons, thereby further supporting the resolve of this State party to meet its obligations under the Convention. The United States has also provided critically needed assistance to other countries in their destruction efforts.

The United States and the Russian Federation have both shown resolve and transparency by hosting visits by delegations of the Executive Council to their chemical weapon destruction facilities. These visits

have enabled representatives of the Council to gain first-hand knowledge, both about the scale of the operations at destruction facilities and the overall magnitude of the undertakings of these two countries.

I reiterate my deep appreciation to both these possessor States for this firm commitment to uphold and fulfil their obligations under the CWC.

China and Japan, for their parts, have submitted reports on the progress made towards the destruction of all chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China. I wish to commend the exemplary cooperation between these two countries in dealing with this historical legacy and, in this regard, to reaffirm the readiness of the Technical Secretariat to provide all possible assistance. Indeed, we can all look forward to the early commencement of the process of destruction of these weapons.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is also making progress towards the elimination of its chemical weapons. The required processes, involving technical reviews and approval of relevant plans by the OPCW Executive Council concerning the destruction facility and activities, are expected to be completed soon. This will set the stage for the destruction of Libya's chemical weapons, so as to complete the process by 2011.

In terms of its security objectives, the CWC is both a disarmament and a non-proliferation instrument. Today we have in operation an effective and efficient industry inspection regime that is key to this non-proliferation effort and to the promotion of confidence among States parties in the chemical industry's legitimate and peaceful activities. Since the CWC entered into force in 1997, the OPCW has conducted almost 3,500 inspections at 195 chemical weapons-related facilities and over 1,100 industrial sites on the territory of all States parties. Over 98 per cent of the world's chemical industry is located on the territory of States parties to the Convention. I once again wish to acknowledge the support the chemical industry has shown for the Convention. This cooperation sustains the confidence in the exclusively peaceful purposes of its activities. However, it must be remembered that there are nearly 4,500 industrial facilities worldwide that are liable to inspections.

As the OPCW moves closer to the goal of the complete elimination of declared chemical weapons stockpiles, it is essential to evolve an industry verification regime that is responsive to the long-term validity of the Convention's non-proliferation objectives. That requires continued refinement and intensification of industry verification to ensure that all categories of relevant facilities, especially the category known as the "other chemical production facilities", are adequately covered under the verification regime.

While those matters are under active consideration by the OPCW's policymaking organs, the Organization's Scientific Advisory Board is engaged in matters that are no less important. There is an increasing overlap between the chemical and biological sciences and a fusion between them and information technology — trends that require close study to determine their relevance to the purposes of the Convention. Those potential developments call for a measure of readiness to adapt the verification regime of the OPCW to new challenges, so that it will continue to effectively serve the goals of the Convention.

Following the adoption of the Plan of Action regarding the Implementation of Article VII obligations, the promotion of effective national implementation of the Convention has remained a priority and represents a highly active programme area for the OPCW. The number of States parties that have enacted legislation covering all key areas had increased from 51 in October 2003 to 82 by 30 October 2008, and 126 States parties had informed the secretariat of the legislative and administrative measures that they had adopted. Of those States parties, 112 had submitted the texts of their adopted measures. The number of States parties that have designated or established a National Authority, which is a step required under the Convention, had increased to 177, or 96 per cent of all States parties.

It is through the establishment of the necessary administrative and legislative measures that States parties equip themselves to detect, pursue and prosecute any breach of the Convention by their nationals on their territory. The relevance of such measures to anti-terrorist efforts is obvious. With the domestic implementation of the CWC showing higher rates of compliance than comparable legal instruments, the OPCW has had its own successful experience and will continue to share it with others. That has been the case in the context of the regional and subregional outreach activities organized by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Security

Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004). I note with satisfaction that the OPCW's contributions related to that Committee's work and experience have been found to be of particular relevance and utility to the United Nations.

Here, I wish to express my gratitude to members of the OPCW individually and to the European Union, acting in the framework of its Joint Actions programme, for having made available generous financial contributions that have sustained an extensive and productive programme of activities in support of the work of the Organization. Of course, this is true not only for programmes in the area of national implementation, but also for activities related to assistance, protection and international cooperation for peaceful purposes. The latter are particularly important for many member States whose economies are developing or in transition.

The delivery of emergency assistance in the event of an attack or threat of attack of chemical weapons has assumed considerable importance in view of the increase in the number of such threats from non-State actors. States parties are therefore keen to build their national capacities to deal with scenarios that may involve either the use of chemical weapons or the use of toxic chemicals as such weapons.

The OPCW regularly holds training courses in all regions of the world. They include programmes for emergency responders as well as field exercises for the delivery of assistance in cooperation and coordination with other organizations, including the United Nations. The next such exercise is scheduled to take place in Tunisia in 2010.

In the field of the peaceful applications of chemistry, OPCW programmes have seen both qualitative and quantitative enhancement, thus benefiting a growing number of qualified individuals, who return from those programmes better equipped to serve their organizations and countries. In that area, Africa receives special attention in terms of the allocation of programmes for and the sponsorship of candidates. For that purpose, the OPCW programme to strengthen cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention is making steady progress, with the cooperation of countries in the region.

An overwhelming majority of the members of the international community are now States parties to the CWC, thus lending to its prohibitions and norms the force of general international law. Adherence by 184 States in 11 years' time is a notable record. Yet, the Convention's objectives and purposes will not be fully realized until the remaining 11 countries Members of the United Nations have joined the Convention. I warmly welcome Iraq's decision to deposit its instrument of accession with the Secretary-General. Lebanon is also expected to do so shortly. That would leave only nine countries outside the jurisdiction of the OPCW. We expect some in that group of nine to accede to the Convention in the near future, as they continue to make tangible progress in their domestic preparations.

I would especially urge the remaining countries in the sensitive region of the Middle East to delink their consideration of joining the Convention from other political and regional issues. I welcome the ongoing interaction that we enjoy with Egypt and with Israel, which is a signatory State. Despite their reservations with regard to joining the CWC, they have not avoided constructive engagement. I hope to enter into similar discussions with Syria. I will continue to appeal to them to consider the benefits that their accession to the Convention would bring to the Middle East region in terms of building mutual confidence and promoting a positive assessment of prospects for peace and security in that part of the world.

It also remains my hope that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which until now has avoided any contact with the OPCW, will make some gesture towards discussing the issue of the abolition of chemical weapons. That would be a positive move in the context of promoting peace on the Korean peninsula and would be consistent with the requirements of Security Council resolution 1718 (2006), which, in addition to dealing with the nuclear issues, refers to the necessity of abandoning other categories of weapons of mass destruction in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

In conclusion, I would like to thank United Nations Member States for their continued interest in and support for the work of the OPCW. I am sure that they share my optimism about the future of an organization whose members have demonstrated great resolve and commitment in upholding the noble objectives of the CWC. Time and again, through their constructive actions and their spirit of consensus, they have raised multilateralism to an exemplary level. For its part, the Technical Secretariat remains fully

committed to the tasks that it has been mandated to perform.

The commonality of objectives between the United Nations and the OPCW, based on the ideals of the United Nations Charter aimed at a prosperous and peaceful world, reminds us of the importance of mutual cooperation and collaboration, which, I am confident, will strengthen further in the years to come.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of India, who will introduce draft resolution A/63/L.7.

Mr. Natchiappan (India): India, as President of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) for this year, is privileged to introduce, on behalf of its sponsors, draft resolution A/63/L.7 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization.

The draft resolution, inter alia, notes the progress achieved in enhancing cooperation among the United Nations, its agencies, other international organizations and AALCO. It expresses appreciation for the work of AALCO with respect to issues such as combating corruption, international terrorism and the trafficking in women and children, as well as human rights issues. It also recommends that the consideration of this item be scheduled to coincide with the Sixth Committee's deliberations on the work of the International Law Commission with a view to promoting close interaction between AALCO and the Sixth Committee.

It may be recalled that the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, as it was then known, was established to provide expertise in international law to Asian and African States, as well as specific assistance and advice upon request on any topic of international law. Such advice could be rendered in developing a suitable legal framework or legislation for implementation of international treaties or for providing a model agreement to establish joint cooperative arrangements, or as an opinion on a given subject to one or more member States.

Over the last 50 years, AALCO has acquired a unique stature in promoting legal cooperation among Asian and African States in the field of international law. Its annual conferences are major events in international law, and the New Delhi session in April this year was well attended by ministers and senior officers of member States, besides several observer delegations and representatives of international organizations. The exchange of views on contemporary issues of international law, including subjects being studied by the International Law Commission and those arising in connection with the implementation of the world trade regime, proved highly beneficial to participants.

Reports of AALCO and declarations adopted at its annual sessions have become an important source for the development of international law and are an expression of the views and interests of the Asian and African States. AALCO has been dedicating its efforts to identifying the common interests of Africa and Asia on a variety of contemporary issues before the United Nations and other world bodies, thus helping the evolution of a fair, just, equitable, universal legal order. These views were duly communicated by the Secretary-General of AALCO to the United Nations, at which it has the distinction of being an observer, and to the International Law Commission, whose sessions its Secretary-General regularly attends.

We would like to encourage AALCO to expand its activities by progressing on its several forward-looking plans for the benefit of its member States. In this regard, mention could be made of special training programmes for the promotion of teaching and expertise in legal advising in international law, the establishment of special chairs in teaching of international law in universities of member State, the offer of fellowships to Asian and African students to pursue higher studies in international law, and the encouragement for publication of books and periodicals devoted to the cause of international law that are of special interest to Asia and Africa.

Some of these activities can, however, be pursued only if more funds are available. The clearance of arrears in contributions and raising funds through voluntary contributions would help.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Secretariat of AALCO has shifted to its new headquarters building, provided by the Government of India. The new building is fully equipped to meet the needs of an intergovernmental organization. We hope its modern conference facilities will motivate AALCO to organize more programmes for the benefit of its members. The shifting of the offices of AALCO and the residence of the Secretary-General to their own

new buildings would also partially ease the financial situation.

However, it is a matter of great satisfaction that, despite its financial limitations, the work of the Organization is efficiently organized by a small but dedicated band of international experts working under the guidance of the international diplomatic staff, including its most competent Secretary-General. Its excellent library and facilities deserve to be further improved. In due course, AALCO could operate as an international law documentation centre for the benefit of Asian and African States.

We congratulate the new Secretary-General of AALCO, Mr. Rahmat Mohamad, and hope he will infuse more vitality in the work of AALCO. We also thank the former Secretary-General, Mr. Wafik Kamil, for his immense contribution to the work of AALCO.

We are optimistic that in the years to come AALCO will achieve greater success in clarifying and consolidating the common interests of Asian and African States. It will also surely enhance its activities in training and the dissemination of international law expertise among them. We have no doubt that the cooperation between AALCO and the United Nations will continue to grow stronger. We wish AALCO and its members every success in their future endeavours.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Albania, who will introduce draft resolution A/63/L.9.

Mr. Dilja (Albania): I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) member States, under sub-item (d) of agenda item 114, the draft resolution contained in document A/63/L.9, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization".

Let me stress at the very beginning the importance that all member States of this organization give to that cooperation with the United Nations. Let me also express the appreciation for the valuable support that all countries that have co-sponsored that resolution have given to it.

The draft resolution on BSEC-United Nations cooperation stresses the priorities of the work of BSEC. It will give further impetus to that cooperation, while reiterating the conviction that multilateral economic cooperation contributes to enhancing peace, stability and security. The wider Black Sea is being increasingly transformed into a dynamic area of development, with a growing weight in both the geopolitical and geo-economic aspects.

The wider Black Sea area can edge closer to its neighbours and the world only through concerted efforts and coordinated initiatives by different regional and international organizations. To that effect the selection of the areas of common interest would produce the necessary premises for engineering significant projects for the region. It could also represent one of the most effective ways to ensure the solidification of BSEC as a regional voice, with its full weight and dignity.

Building on experience and the advanced institutional frame, BSEC offers a pragmatic project and a results-oriented approach in the spheres of common interest, thus contributing to improved regional cooperation and beyond, as well as the creation of synergies and an increase in the efficiency of resource use. As an acknowledgment of those qualifications, different actors in the region and beyond have given further attention to BSEC.

The enhanced regional cooperation through BSEC and its interaction with other regional and international organizations, of which the United Nations is among the first, is one of the best ways to effectively address the threats and challenges that lie ahead and is a real contribution to confidence-building in the region and beyond, as a prerequisite to a more peaceful and secure world.

This year, preparation of the draft resolution has taken into consideration the ongoing reform of BSEC aimed at increasing its effectiveness. Also, it serves the purpose of promoting cooperation among members of BSEC and its strategic partners worldwide.

We are convinced that this year's draft resolution will further strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and will contribute to the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations, as well as the statutory goals and objectives of BSEC.

Before I conclude, I would like, on behalf of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, to extend our thanks to all the delegations that contributed to this draft resolution. It is also the hope of the

sponsors that the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote, as in previous years.

The Acting President: I call next on the representative of Uruguay, who will introduce draft resolution A/63/L.10.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is honoured to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, the draft resolution contained in document A/63/L.10, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System".

The Latin American Economic System (LAES) is an intergovernmental regional agency made up of 26 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It was created in 1975 and is headquartered in Caracas, Venezuela. The purpose of LAES is to promote a system of consultation and coordination for the adoption of common positions and strategies on economic matters throughout the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean vis-à-vis groups of nations, forums and international agencies, as well as to boost cooperation and integration among countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

On 27 September 1991, the United Nations and LAES signed a cooperation agreement in which they agreed to strengthen and expand cooperation on topics of common interest. In order to give further impetus to the already fruitful relationship between those two bodies, I now introduce the draft resolution that we trust will receive unanimous support from the Assembly.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Sweden, who will introduce draft resolutions A/63/L.11 and A/63/L.12.

Mr. Lidén (Sweden): Sweden, representing the Chair of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), has the honour to introduce a draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization", which is contained in document A/63/L.11.

A political momentum is building up around the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). There is increased attention by the world community to the role of the CTBT in nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear weapons proliferation, which continue to be among the most important challenges facing humankind today. We all know the importance of the CTBT for the overall non-proliferation regime, raising the threshold for the acquisition of nuclear weapons, preventing a qualitative arms race and building confidence through an effective verification system. Positive developments regarding ratification of the Treaty would furthermore give important impetus to the review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 2010.

The CTBT has been signed by 180 States and ratified by 145 of them. Only nine so-called Annex 2 States remain to ratify the Treaty in order for it to enter into force. The Treaty's verification regime is now well advanced in its build-up. More than 80 per cent of the International Monitoring System stations have been certified or constructed. An international scientific studies project is under way to monitor the progress of the verification regime. The verification regime thus seems to be ready for the Treaty to enter into force soon.

The coming period will be a defining one for the Treaty's future. Sweden was among the very first nations to sign and ratify the CTBT and has made a consistent contribution to furthering it. Therefore we feel a special responsibility and have steadfastly supported the efforts of our partners and the CTBTO Preparatory Commission in promoting the Treaty. In that regard, we welcome recent ratifications of the Treaty by States and call on other States to follow that lead. We also appreciate the work of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO and its Executive Secretary and the efforts of the Provisional Technical Secretariat. We call on all delegations to support the draft resolution.

Let me now turn to the second draft resolution that I have the honour to introduce today. This time I do so because of Sweden's current chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The resolution is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe" and is contained in document A/63/L.12.

The draft resolution demonstrates the wide range of areas where the United Nations and the Council of Europe cooperate and where the Council's activities contribute to furthering the goals of the United Nations. The first draft of the resolution was prepared by the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg. We have

conducted informal consultations with United Nations Member States, and I wish to thank all delegations for their constructive and cooperative approach to the consultations.

With the changes that were agreed during the consultation process, I hope that the text before us here today will be adopted by consensus. In addition to the 33 countries that appear as sponsors in document A/63/L.12, the following countries have also joined as sponsors: Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malta, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Belarus, who will introduce draft resolution A/63/L.13.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): It is my great honour, on behalf of the member States of the Eurasian Economic Community — the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan — to present draft resolution A/63/L.13 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community.

The Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC) was created in 2000. Since 2003 it has enjoyed observer status in the General Assembly, and it closely cooperates with agencies of the United Nations system. With the objective of strengthening the institutional framework of that cooperation, in September 2006 a memorandum of understanding was signed between EURASEC and the United Nations Development Programme. In January 2007, a cooperation agreement between the EURASEC Inter-Parliamentary Assembly and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe was concluded.

Last year the General Assembly adopted its first resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community (resolution 62/79), which was based on strengthening cooperation between the organizations and reinforcing the practical links.

The draft resolution submitted for the Assembly's consideration is prepared on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the first resolution on cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Community and the United Nations in such fields as the management of water resources, energy and technology transfer (see A/63/228, paras. 67-70). The draft also invites continued cooperation between the two organizations.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to convey my gratitude to the sponsors of the resolution and all delegations that took part in the consultations and contributed towards the agreement on the text of the resolution.

Mr. Del Picchia (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Montenegro and the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

The development of the regional integration process is one of the essential factors that have contributed to economic development and the maintenance of peace and security throughout the world. It is only natural that such development should go hand in hand with improved cooperation with the United Nations.

The EU is among the most ambitious and successful examples of regional integration. By strengthening the solidarity among its members and implementing its policies throughout the Union, the EU has successfully bridged divides and promoted prosperity within its borders. The role played and the competencies exercised by the EU are fully in keeping with the spirit of the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, which encourages cooperation between regional organizations and the United Nations in accordance, of course, with the purposes and principles of the Charter, in particular the pre-eminence of the Security Council in the area of peacekeeping.

The European Union has supported the objective of mutual strengthening between the United Nations and regional organizations. As stressed in the European Security Strategy, adopted in 2003 — which we intend to update before the end of the year — one of the EU's priorities is to strengthen the United Nations and equip

it with the means it needs to shoulder its responsibilities and undertake effective action.

On the basis of the 2003 and 2007 EU-United Nations joint declarations, the cooperation between the EU and the Organization in the areas of crisis management and security has developed significantly in recent years, particularly through the launching of EU operations, within the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy, to support United Nations peacekeeping operations. We have made that a priority of the French presidency of the European Union. EU ministers raised the issue at a seminar held in New York on 26 September, attended by the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon; Mr. Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy; and Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations. Furthermore, from 20 to 22 October in Paris, we held the first meeting of the International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations, on cooperation between the EU and the United Nations as an example of partnership under Chapter VIII of the Charter. Many representatives of major regional organizations, including the African Union, participated. In addition to the realm of security, the EU has lent constant support to the United Nations in the areas of humanitarian and development assistance and the defence and promotion of human rights.

The European Union attaches great importance to the development of other examples of regional integration throughout the world. It has long been developing institutional ties with various regional organizations and promotes the strengthening of those organizations particularly through its development policy. In particular, it welcomes the role played by many regional and subregional bodies in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The European Union welcomes the strengthening of the ties between regional organizations and institutions and the United Nations, as one can see from reading the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228), and continues to attach great importance to the framework provided by Security Council resolution 1631 (2005), on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security.

In particular, the European Union supports close cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in the area of crisis management on the African continent. In that regard, it welcomes the Secretary-General's establishment of an EU-United Nations panel to assess modalities of support for regional peace operations carried out under United Nations mandates.

The European Union encourages close cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The cooperation among the United Nations, the OSCE and the EU during the Georgian conflict and their co-chairmanship of the international discussions in Geneva demonstrate the potential of such cooperation in crisis management and conflict settlement. The three organizations are also jointly engaged in Kosovo.

The European Union also welcomes the development of cooperation between the United Nations system and the Council of Europe, in particular in the areas of intercultural dialogue, child protection, combating violence against women, protecting refugees and promoting human rights education. The Council of Europe is the best example of the very positive role that a regional organization can play in protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In addition, the European Union attaches great importance to the rapprochement between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), which represents one third of the States with seats in the General Assembly and is increasingly asserting itself as a political force on the international scene. The EU notes with satisfaction the increased cooperation between the two organizations in the area of peacekeeping, as illustrated by the participation of the Secretary-General, together with some 40 heads of State or Government of French-speaking countries, in the Quebec summit held from 17 to 19 October this year and by the holding in April of a joint United Nations-OIF seminar on cooperation in the areas of early warning and conflict prevention.

Thus, together with the Secretary-General, the OIF is working to build French-speaking capacities within the framework of peacekeeping operations. The OIF does not seek to duplicate United Nations activities, but rather to carry out supplementary ones in consultation with the Secretary-General, relying on the

intrinsic added value of multilateral Francophone capacities.

It is not only regional organizations that can help the United Nations to attain Charter objectives. In that connection, the European Union particularly commends the role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and welcomes the growing cooperation between it and the United Nations. Given the essential role played by national parliaments in defining national policies, we believe it essential that parliamentarians of various countries be increasingly better informed about ongoing developments at the United Nations. Furthermore, the United Nations, like the agencies within it, must work in ever closer cooperation with parliaments to improve the assessment of States' international commitments in drafting legislation and national budgets.

The European Union therefore supports the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report, in particular that the outcome document of the annual parliamentary hearing of the IPU at the United Nations be distributed as an official United Nations document. The next hearing will take place on 20 and 21 November.

Finally, the European Union, of course, strongly supports broadening the cooperation between the United Nations and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and works tirelessly to promote universal ratification of the Treaty. The same applies to cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which might be further increased, in particular in relation to the OPCW's efforts — like those of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) — to combat chemical terrorism.

The European Union believes that good coordination between regional and other organizations, on the one hand, and the United Nations, on the other, can strengthen United Nations action, whether in the area of economic development, security or the promotion of human rights.

For all those reasons, the European Union looks forward to actively participating in the coming days in formulating draft resolutions under General Assembly agenda item 114.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), on agenda item 114 (e), entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community". It is my first duty to express appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report that he has presented (A/63/228) to facilitate our consideration of the item.

I am proud to assert that CARICOM is a family that is close-knit by ties of geography, culture and history. But that closeness never obscures in our minds our membership also in a wider community — a global community that is desperately in need of a global order that draws its inspiration from nowhere else but the Charter of the United Nations. However fragile, however fractured that order may be at present, our world would be a dark and dreary place without the light offered by the United Nations Charter along our path to a peaceful, just and habitable planet. Hence the importance of cooperation with the United Nations and of giving effect to the principles contained in its Charter.

What is more, we in CARICOM have a number of shared interests and goals, and we face basically the same kinds of challenges. Like any other family, we endeavour to seek ways to strengthen our unity of action to meet our common needs and goals. Basically, we are prepared, as far as it is possible, to seek solutions to the challenges facing us all.

But there are naturally some problems that will not be solved by our own collective self-help efforts, however hard we may try. Some require cooperation that is much deeper, much wider and more varied than we can ever forge within our own subregion. That is another area where the United Nations becomes so important to us. In this Organization, we feel ourselves to be a family within a family. The consideration of the question of cooperation with the United Nations provides an opportunity for us to focus afresh on the bonds and the many commonalities that exist between us and the Organization, what our cooperation has achieved and what it still needs to achieve. Much of that we will detail in a draft resolution that we intend to present for the consideration of this Assembly.

For those reasons, therefore, when I ascended to this podium, it was not simply because the date and the time for this item had come. More fundamentally, it was to show once again the deep commitment of CARICOM to the objectives and goals of the United Nations and to outline our vision of the place of

CARICOM-United Nations cooperation in the wider polity.

CARICOM is a community which, for the most part, is comprised of small island and low-lying coastal developing States, all facing peculiar sustainable development challenges arising therefrom. For us, the effects of climate change are an overwhelming and enduring concern. As members of the wider family, we therefore feel entitled to look to the United Nations for recognition of the vulnerabilities to which our special status exposes us and for the establishment of a corresponding regime of solidarity and cooperation.

We are pleased that, following the adoption of the Millennium Declaration and the Final Document of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, our case was robustly sustained by the Organization in the adoption of resolution 61/197, which, inter alia, expressed unequivocal support for the efforts of the CARICOM States to have the Caribbean Sea designated as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

More specifically, in the area of climate change, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and, in particular, the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama, have facilitated a number of environmental initiatives, most recently the promotion of the multilateral environmental agreement project between UNEP, the European Community and African, Caribbean and Pacific States, which seeks to build the capacity of CARICOM member States to meet their obligations under a selected set of multilateral environmental agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. UNEP is also working with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre and the CARICOM secretariat in ensuring that the region is updated on preparations for the Copenhagen climate change conference.

In the area of food security, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been active in the region in promoting the nexus between food security, climate change, sustainable development and agriculture in the Caribbean. FAO continues to maintain an amicable, mutually beneficial and sustainable relationship with the Caribbean Community in general. That relationship covers a wide range of activities in the agricultural sector, including promoting food security through the Regional Programme for Food Security. FAO has also been responsive to the current rise in food prices and the resulting negative consequences it poses to the region. It has provided in excess of $1.25 million in direct grant assistance distributed among CARICOM member States, with Haiti being treated separately. Those funds have been used to help small-scale farm production input resources, including seeds, fertilizer, chemicals and tools, by assisting member States in implementing a project on soaring food prices and in developing sustainable strategies in the economic production of food.

The Caribbean Community has benefited tremendously over the years from development assistance made available by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) over a succession of programming cycles and, within the past decade, under successive regional cooperation frameworks. The Community has thereby received much valued technical training, advisory and operational assistance provided to CARICOM member States, the CARICOM secretariat and other CARICOM institutions with region-wide mandates and responsibilities.

The esteem in which UNDP is held in its relations with the Community is a function not merely of the quantum or variety of resources we have received over the years, but also of the strategic, substantive and truly development-oriented nature of the assistance granted and the responsiveness of the Programme to CARICOM needs and priorities.

CARICOM States are also the beneficiaries, in a number of areas critical to our development, of a network of relations of functional cooperation with several other funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, including UNICEF, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Population Fund. We greatly value those relationships, and look forward to their continuation and intensification.

CARICOM's cooperation with the United Nations happily maintains a dynamic character, including bilateral and multilateral consultations, focus groups, memorandums of understanding and other working agreements, information-sharing, joint programme development and continuous interaction, which allow us to address issues as soon as they arise and help prevent stasis. The highest level of those

consultations is the general meeting between the United Nations system and the Caribbean Community and its associated institutions.

The meeting is usually organized by the Department of Political Affairs, with which CARICOM representatives naturally maintain a close and productive working relationship. Preparations are currently in train for the fifth general meeting, which is due to take place in New York in January 2009. CARICOM States are looking forward to that meeting, at which we expect the heads of regional agencies to be represented. On that occasion, in addition to giving voice to our own concerns regarding the state of cooperation with the Organization, including our dissatisfaction at the closure of the Caribbean Regional Office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Barbados, we will also be looking forward to joining the Secretariat in constructing with us a shared vision of a regime of cooperation that is fully consistent with the realities and challenges of the rapidly evolving international context.

The various development efforts to which I have referred naturally require, for their successful implementation and maintenance, an overarching umbrella of security. So vital is the field of security that it was officially included as the fourth pillar of the Caribbean integration process, joining the three pre-existing priority pillars of human and social development, trade and economic integration and foreign policy coordination. Even as the Community strengthens its security arrangements and makes every effort to fulfil its international security commitments, it looks to the United Nations and its relevant specialized agencies, including UNODC, to support its efforts. We are pleased that UNODC has recommenced work in the Caribbean in concert with the relevant regional counterparts. However, we reiterate the region's call for the reopening of the UNODC Office in the Caribbean.

More generally, we have found in the United Nations — both at the level of the Secretariat and that of the Assembly at large — a framework within which we can maximize the benefits of cooperation in those areas where we consider the potential threats to be greatest. I refer to our active contributions to the global effort for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and also towards the conclusion of an arms trade treaty, among other initiatives.

The special challenges faced by our sister State of Haiti have also provided occasion for mutual cooperation between CARICOM and the United Nations. We wish to place on record here our gratitude and appreciation through the work being done through the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). CARICOM recognizes the sacrifices made and the support that continues to be extended to MINUSTAH by countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as other parts of the globe. We welcome the adoption on 14 October of resolution 1840 (2008), by which the Security Council extended the mandate of MINUSTAH by one year, thereby assuring the maintenance of critical international support for Haiti at this time when it continues to be tested. In our view, it is vital that MINUSTAH's mandate remain adequate to the evolving realities and needs of the situation in Haiti.

Finally, in our cooperation with the United Nations, CARICOM States see, beyond the satisfaction of our interests as a regional collectivity, the need for a wider service to the international community and the need to help ensure that the high and lofty principles of the Charter do not remain just that — high and lofty principles — but that we also do our part to secure their attainment and their consistent fulfilment. It is that vision that propels our active participation in the dialogue on issues as varied as reform of the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, and so on. In that way, we believe, we are helping to create an Organization that is modern, responsive, democratic and outward-looking and that encourages and truly strengthens faith in the principle of international organization. In the final analysis, we believe that it is in our actions in those disparate areas that we engage in the most practical cooperation with the United Nations.

Mr. Salguiero (Portugal): On behalf of the States members of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP) — Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste — I have the honour to speak on item 114 (f), "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries".

Since CPLP was granted observer status to the United Nations in 1999, it has engaged in multiple activities that complement and support the work of the Organization in the realms of political coordination, facilitation, mediation, electoral assistance, institution-rebuilding, and the promotion of development and cooperation in cultural and social areas.

In the two years since the adoption of resolution 61/223, under Guinea-Bissau's chairmanship of CPLP the Community's relations with the United Nations system have developed and strengthened in an impressive manner, proving to be mutually advantageous. I will highlight just a few concrete examples of existing initiatives and partnerships.

CPLP and the United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization are jointly organizing workshops for journalists on reporting on elections and on HIV/AIDS prevention.

On 25 April 2008, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Executive Secretariat of CPLP and the Portuguese unit of United Nations Radio regarding exchange of information and cooperation on the promotion of journalistic content to a Portuguese-speaking audience and with a view to organizing initiatives to promote cultural diversity within Portuguese-speaking countries.

Last May, a technical cooperation project was signed by the CPLP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, aimed at the formulation of a South-South/North-South cooperation programme for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

A cooperation agreement between the International Fund for Agricultural Development and CPLP, signed in November 2007, will intensify the fight against rural poverty in Portuguese-speaking developing countries.

A partnership between CPLP, the International Labour Organization and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, supported by the Brazilian and Portuguese Governments, led to the holding of a training course on combating child labour in the Portuguese-speaking countries in December 2006.

CPLP is also preparing the launching of a lusophone education network, in partnership with the World Bank, aimed at accelerating the response of the educational sector in member States to the HIV/AIDS pandemics.

Those actions, among others, described in the report of the CPLP to the General Assembly, transmitted in document A/63/343, and in the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations, contained in document A/63/228, demonstrate the engagement of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries in multilateral actions initiated by the United Nations towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and addressing the effects of climate change.

In accordance with the pertinent dispositions of the Charter of the United Nations that encourage regional cooperation for the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries has also reached cooperation agreements with a number of regional, subregional and intergovernmental organizations, including the African Union, the Council of Europe, the Economic Community of West African States and the International Organization of la Francophonie. A memorandum of understanding with the European Commission was signed in November 2007, which we expect to be the basis for great improvements in the multilateral CPLP cooperation framework.

At the seventh CPLP summit held in Lisbon on 25 July 2008, the heads of State and Government recalled the far-reaching importance of sharing a language spoken today by over 250 million people in eight countries and four continents, and reached a political commitment to promote the Portuguese language in the international community, including in international and regional organizations and United Nations agencies and programmes. The promotion of Portuguese as a global language and CPLP's contribution to peace, regional stability and food security were the main topics of the summit and are the main priorities of the current two-year Portuguese chairmanship of CPLP.

The Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries supports the work of the Guinea-Bissau country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, which has been actively chaired by the Permanent Representative of Brazil, Ambassador Maria Luiza Viotti, and in whose deliberations CPLP and all its member States are proud to participate. The

Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries is also assisting Guinea-Bissau's current electoral process, in particular in the deployment of an election observation mission.

In Timor-Leste, CPLP and its member States are deeply committed to strengthening State institutions and are working as prominent partners with the United Nations and the Timorese authorities in efforts to consolidate peace and promote development.

In the coming days, the States members of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries will introduce a draft resolution under agenda item 114 stressing the progress achieved in the cooperation between CPLP, United Nations agencies and other bodies and programmes, and encouraging the establishment of a formal cooperation agreement between the secretariats of both organizations. I thank in advance all Member States that may wish to offer their support and sponsorship.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/63/PV.37

General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

37th plenary meeting
Monday, 3 November 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 114 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(a) Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(b) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.7)

(c) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(d) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.9)

(e) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(f) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(g) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.12)

(h) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States

(i) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(j) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.13)

(k) Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(l) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(m) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

Draft resolution (A/63/L.10)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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(n) Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(o) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/63/155)

(p) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

(q) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States

(r) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(s) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(t) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/63/156)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.11)

(u) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

We are now witnessing a blossoming of regionalism in all corners of the world. Now more than ever, regional organizations and arrangements have played a pivotal role in bringing countries together and nurturing a habit of consultation and cooperation in all areas of common concern and interest. ASEAN welcomes that blossoming and strengthening of regionalism because we see regionalism as a building block of, and a supporting pillar for, the effective global multilateralism that is embodied in the United Nations.

We are also witnessing a blossoming of partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations. ASEAN welcomes the increasing emphasis that the United Nations has given to forging partnerships with many regional organizations in all regions of the world. Such a partnership in this interdependent and globalized world is truly a win-win relationship. By engaging with regional organizations, the United Nations benefits from their in-depth and unique understanding about the challenges, concerns, sensitivities and nuances of those regions. At the same time, regional organizations would benefit from the United Nations vast wealth of expertise, best practices and networks in a broad range of issues.

ASEAN is committed to continuing to advance the noble principles and objectives of the United Nations in South-East Asia. For over 40 years since its founding in 1967, ASEAN has emerged as a stable force for regional peace and security, for enhanced economic integration and for the creation of a community of caring and sharing societies. Through ASEAN, countries of South-East Asia come together and peacefully interact on all issues of common concern for the region. Through habit of working together and consensus-making, ASEAN countries have been successful in turning enmity into amity. By managing differences and emphasizing commonalities, ASEAN as a group has managed to overcome successive challenges facing the region. But ASEAN knows that we cannot be complacent. And that is why we are witnessing a renaissance of ASEAN in South-East Asia.

At the ASEAN summit in Singapore last year, ASEAN leaders came together with common objectives in mind: to make South-East Asia a better place, to make ASEAN a stronger organization and to ensure that ASEAN will continue to be a strong and effective partner for international peace, stability and prosperity.

At that summit in Singapore, ASEAN leaders took a bold step forward by signing a landmark ASEAN Charter, which will provide a legal and institutional framework to make ASEAN a more rules-based, people-centred, effective and efficient organization. The signing of the ASEAN Charter was a

significant milestone in the ASEAN community-building process, whose goal is to transform a region that is home to over 500 million people into an ASEAN Community by 2015. It is also important to note that, by signing the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN leaders have committed themselves to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance, and respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, while respecting the fundamental importance of amity and cooperation and the principles of sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, non-interference, consensus and unity in diversity. Today, the ASEAN member States are working to ratify the ASEAN Charter in time for its entry into force at the fourteenth ASEAN summit, in Thailand in December 2008.

Partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations has been long and enduring and has grown from strength to strength. The United Nations Development Programme was designated an ASEAN Dialogue Partner in 1977 and has since been working closely with ASEAN in a wide range of regional development issues. In 2006, ASEAN was granted observer status in the General Assembly. In 2007, the Secretaries-General of ASEAN and the United Nations signed a memorandum of understanding on ASEAN-United Nations cooperation to promote a full range of cooperation based on mutual benefits.

However, it took the tragic Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 to really test and prove the strength and resilience of the partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations. In response to that natural disaster, ASEAN firmly adhered to the ASEAN way that emphasizes understanding, dialogue and, most important, trust and confidence, while being clear about the need for the group to act. Thus the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force for the Victims of the Cyclone Nargis was established in May this year by ASEAN Foreign Ministers to work closely with the United Nations and Myanmar in coordinating international assistance. In so doing, ASEAN successfully acted to build a diplomatic bridge with the international community through the United Nations.

It is evident that the ASEAN-led coordination mechanism and the Tripartite Core Group subsequently established on the basis of partnership between Myanmar, ASEAN and the United Nations have played a pivotal role in ensuring the timely, coordinated, systematic and effective delivery and utilization of emergency humanitarian relief supplies, as well as planning for recovery and rebuilding efforts over the longer term. That partnership has been welcomed by all sides, including the United Nations, as a successful model of cooperation that could be applied to other regions facing humanitarian emergencies.

We are determined to sustain and build on that positive momentum of partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations. In December this year, the third ASEAN-United Nations summit will be held in Thailand. It will provide a good opportunity for ASEAN leaders and the Secretary-General, as well as heads of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, to forge a comprehensive and system-wide partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations.

ASEAN believes that there are many endeavours in which ASEAN and the United Nations could benefit from working together on critical areas of global concern, such as mitigating the impacts of the current global financial crisis and other pressing issues such as attaining the Millennium Development Goals, food and energy security, environmental management and climate change, strengthening global and regional cooperation on disaster management, and fighting against deadly infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and avian flu.

This year, ASEAN will also submit a biennial draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations under this agenda item. The draft resolution is based on the most recent resolution on that subject (resolution 61/46), which the Assembly adopted by consensus in December 2006. The draft resolution contains factual updates on positive developments regarding cooperation between the United Nations and ASEAN during the past two years. ASEAN hopes that this draft resolution will enjoy strong support from our partners, as in the past.

ASEAN is going through an exciting time in its evolution. It is transforming itself from a community of ten ASEAN countries into an ASEAN community, from a collection of different markets and production bases into a single market and production base, and from a community of ten identities into a community based on a common identity.

ASEAN is confident that, together as one in the spirit of ASEAN solidarity, we will succeed in

achieving the goal that we have set for ourselves. ASEAN's success will be the success of the United Nations because a stronger, more cohesive and effective ASEAN will be a stronger and more effective partner for the United Nations.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): I have the honour to present this statement on behalf of members of the Pacific Islands Forum based in New York, namely: Australia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and New Zealand.

At the outset, I thank the Secretary-General for his report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/63/228). The cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum has gained momentum in recent years, and we are pleased that the United Nations has observer status at the Forum.

We encourage regular consultations between our Forum's Secretariat and the United Nations, as well as United Nations participation in meetings of Pacific Islands Forum leaders.

We welcome the cooperation of United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies to help the Pacific Islands address and overcome the ever-growing challenges before us, especially the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The United Nations "delivering as one", processes are already under way in the Pacific region. The development of the United Nations development assistance framework for the Pacific subregion, which covers the period from 2008 to 2012 and brings together 15 United Nations agencies located in several different countries, has been a significant step towards implementing this "delivering as one" approach.

We also need to work closely together to ensure full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Global financial and economic turbulence and the threat of global recession pose great risks to us all. Small, isolated economies like many of those in our region are especially vulnerable. The Forum's engagement with the United Nations and its funds and programmes helps to address those areas of vulnerability and to strengthen national and regional development, thereby strengthening our region's ability to engage with the international community.

We can already point to a number of areas of valuable cooperation with the United Nations. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has supported implementation of the Forum's Pacific Plan, which is the overarching framework for collaboration and cooperation among Forum countries. We also appreciate the work done by UNDP and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to support the integration of MDGs into national development strategies in our region. Other assistance has been provided in the areas of disaster risk management, human security, anti-corruption, private sector development and disabilities issues.

Donor coordination and aid delivery in accordance with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness has been a growing focus in our region. Pacific leaders have adopted the Pacific Aid Effectiveness Principles, emphasizing the importance of this work to all of us. We welcome the work of the UNDP Pacific Centre on enhancing donor coordination in the region, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with United Nations agencies in that respect.

We are grateful too for the work done by the United Nations Environmental Programme in our region on sustainable development, and for its support for the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), which is involved in a range of environmental programmes in the Pacific. UNICEF's efforts that focus on improved nutrition, child immunization, better quality child-focused data and budgeting are much needed. We also welcome engagement between United Nations agencies and Pacific regional organizations in coordinating our response on HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

These areas of cooperation, and many others not listed, are greatly valued, as is the strengthened United Nations presence in our region in recent years. However, we do believe that there is still scope to do significantly more and, in particular, to increase the impact of the partnerships between the United Nations system and the Pacific Islands Forum. We urge all United Nations agencies operating in the region to constantly assess their role and engagements against that of Pacific regional agencies. It is critical that we

all look to maximize collaborative action and avoid duplication.

Finally, we note that the Pacific Islands Forum covers a vast region of island States and that our region is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. A draft resolution entitled "Security and climate change" (A/63/L.8) has been submitted by Pacific small island developing States under agenda item 107. We encourage all Member States to support that draft resolution.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Group in New York. I would like to thank and commend the Secretary-General for the comprehensive and informative biennial report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/63/228). From the outset, I wish to reiterate the commitment of the OIC to deepening its cooperation with the United Nations.

I would also like to acknowledge the successful outcome of the biennial general meeting on cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC, held in Geneva from 8 to 10 July 2008. The Secretary-General's report captures some of the major outcomes of this meeting, some of which I would like to highlight today as they merit inclusion in the upcoming resolution on OIC-United Nations cooperation.

First, the report enumerates the efforts undertaken by the two organizations in enhancing practical cooperation and building complementarity through regular meetings at the level of the Secretaries-General and through consultations among other critical actors, including the Special Adviser on the International Compact with Iraq, the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the High-level Coordinator on the issue of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third country nationals or their remains.

Secondly, the report draws attention to the International Conference on Terrorism, held in November 2007 in Tunisia and coordinated by the two organizations in partnership with the Government of Tunisia, where a fruitful exchange of views took place. Participants dispelled misapprehensions about Islam, identified vulnerable areas exploited by terrorists in the social, cultural, ethical and ideological spheres, and recommended solutions to make those areas less conducive to their use.

Thirdly, the report notes that the Geneva meeting of the representatives of the United Nations system and OIC and its specialized institutions in July reviewed cooperation in various fields, including science, technology, trade, development, implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), refugees, human resource development, food security, agriculture, environment, health, population, arts, crafts and promotion of heritage. Both sides also agreed to improve follow-up mechanisms by identifying focal points and exchanging lists of officials specializing in areas of common interest.

Fourthly, the report notes that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has been developing a dialogue with OIC to reach out to non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian actors in Islamic countries, and that UNICEF has been exploring ways to develop and formalize its partnership with OIC, including specific initiatives linked to the MDGs as part of the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action.

I commend the Secretary-General for highlighting the aforementioned developments and urge follow-up in the implementation of agreed activities and programmes.

I would now like to draw attention to several other equally important issues, undertakings and decisions pertaining to OIC-United Nations cooperation that did not appear in the Secretary-General's report, which also require follow-up and implementation.

First is the general meeting's acknowledgement that the OIC remains an important partner to the United Nations in peace and security and in fostering a culture of peace at the global level, and the agreement between the two sides to continue cooperation in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Second is the United Nations offer to inform the OIC of and invite it to seminars and other training opportunities in the areas of conflict prevention, negotiations, mediation and elections organized by and for the United Nations.

Third are the efforts of the two organizations to promote and facilitate the Middle East peace process in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1515 (2003), General Assembly resolution 194 (III),

the Arab Peace Initiative, the Road Map and the commitments of the Annapolis Conference. Those should be recognized, and inter-organizational cooperation in all fields that serve that goal should be encouraged.

Fourth, the OIC proposal for greater interaction between the two Secretariats beyond the current biennial arrangement to include a periodic review of cooperation should be acknowledged through appropriate follow-up directives.

Fifth is the close cooperation between the OIC Secretariat and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in advancing dialogue and intercultural understanding, including the Secretary-General's participation in the OIC summit inviting the Alliance to all major OIC conferences, and holding meetings between the OIC Secretary-General and the High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations to institutionalize cooperation between the two organizations and finalize a memorandum of understanding between the two organizations.

Sixth is multifaceted cooperation among the OIC and the United Nations and its specialized agencies in humanitarian affairs, which should be welcomed. There is a need to pursue greater proactive engagement, resulting in the implementation of concrete programmes in capacity-building, emergency assistance and strategic partnerships.

Seventh, the two organizations should strengthen cooperation in fighting poverty in Member States to promote sustainable development and achieve the MDGs.

Lastly, at the Annual Coordination Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Member States of the Islamic Conference, held on 26 September 2008 here at the United Nations, it was decided to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the OIC in 2009 with national and international programmes on different aspects of the OIC, highlighting its activities, evolution and reform. The OIC looks forward to collaborating with the United Nations in the commemoration.

I would like to conclude by underlining the essential role that cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations can play in the achievement of international peace and prosperity, including the MDGs. However, our approach must be pragmatic and holistic to ensure that agreed activities are implemented. That will require the wider international community to lend its full support to attaining that objective. The OIC Group will be tabling a draft resolution under agenda item 114 — Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations — and we look forward to the full support of all our partners.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Building a collective approach, which is crucial to overcome temporary threats and challenges effectively, requires a gradual strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, based on the firm foundation of the United Nations Charter, especially Chapter VIII.

The United Nations and regional organizations are intended to complement each other harmoniously and to make use of their specific comparative advantages. With respect to the United Nations, that means above all universality of membership and of areas of activity and universally recognized legitimacy. In turn, regional organizations often have a better understanding of local circumstances and more suitable equipment, as well as their own sources of financing. A clear division of labour, while maintaining the prerogatives of the United Nations and its Security Council, will make it possible to increase the capacity in the international community for dealing with crises.

We think that regular meetings of the Secretary-General of the United Nations with leaders of regional organizations are extremely relevant. The United Nations agenda of cooperation with its regional partners is becoming more ambitious and multifaceted. To peacekeeping and peacebuilding goals have been added combating the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, resolving other destabilizing cross-border problems, fighting drug trafficking and organized crime and contributing to solving the various complex socio-economic issues around the world.

The Russian Federation continues to strongly support further strengthening multifaceted cooperation between the United Nations and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC), which has made significant contributions to overcoming contemporary problems

and challenges at both the regional and global levels. We welcome the already solid ties those regional mechanisms have with the United Nations and their joint implementation of a number of projects and programmes.

Integrated processes in our region have become more mature and active and have increasingly drawn in countries from neighbouring subregions. The legal, institutional and financial basis for that kind of cooperation is becoming firmly established. Within the CIS, CSTO and EURASEC, systematic and comprehensive interaction is under way, including in such areas as ensuring security, peacekeeping, fighting organized and cross-border crime, economic development and trade, environmental protection, humanitarian relief operations and regulation of migration.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the CSTO has considerable potential. Within the CSTO, very intensive work is under way to establish its own in-house peacekeeping potential, including for use in the framework of United Nations peacekeeping operations. There are considerable opportunities for pooling the efforts of those two organizations.

Cooperation between CSTO member States on United Nations issues is based not only on common positions on many of the current problems on the United Nations agenda, but also on an understanding of the need to strengthen its leading role in international affairs. We are interested in maximizing the collective mechanisms and potential of the United Nations in neutralizing challenges to regional security arising from international terrorism and in contributing to economic development.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is playing an increasing role in ensuring stability in the Eurasian region. Its members favour further developing their cooperation with the United Nations in a number of very important areas, including fighting international terrorism and the illegal drug trade, thus contributing to the post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan.

In the very near future, the States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization intend to raise the issue of including on the agenda of the Assembly's sixty-fourth session a new item on cooperation between the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

We also support further strengthening cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Community and the United Nations. EURASEC is developing rapidly at present. Cooperation is under way on a number of key issues, including transport cooperation, energy, tourism, environmental protection, overcoming emergency situations, migration, education and other areas. Within the Community, steps have been taken to establish a customs union, a free trade area and a single energy market.

Now that intensive and practical activity is fully in line with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and further strengthens the commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter, which is enshrined in the constitutive documents of the Community. The Eurasian Economic Community furthermore has played a key role in the extensive structures of multilateral cooperation in the region aimed at ensuring sustainable development, stability, peace and security. That makes it an important partner of the United Nations system in our region and points to the need to further step up efforts to develop cooperation between the two organizations.

According to the report of the Secretary-General, the main achievements in that area have been highlighted. We welcome those achievements, but we believe it is necessary to further strengthen cooperation. With a view to strengthening the results of that cooperation, Russia has, together with Belarus, the current president of the Community, submitted to the United Nations a draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community. We attach great importance to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus and wish to thank all delegations that have taken part in its elaboration and have joined its original two sponsors.

We also think that the potential for mutually beneficial cooperation between the United Nations and other integration mechanisms in the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States is far from having been exhausted. In that context, we expect more activity, initiative and openness to dialogue from the leadership of the United Nations agencies. Russia is ready to do its part to work towards further strengthening that cooperation.

I would like also to mention the issue of cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC).

Russia is an active and concerned member of that main comprehensive forum for Black Sea cooperation. We support efforts to further increase the work of that organization and to adapt it to current realities. We are convinced that ensuring stable development, prosperity and security in the region will require the implementation of long-term mutually beneficial economic projects carried out in the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. We think that projects such as the circular motorway around the Black Sea and the establishment of a circular Black Sea electric power grid are excellent examples of that kind of project.

We support the work already under way in the BSEC to create a common energy strategy for countries in the region. We think that cooperation between the BSEC and the European Union should be based on equal footing and mutual benefit and the Community preserve, even augment, its own identity. The BSEC is also ready to cooperate with countries outside the region. That participation should be based on the principle of non-interference in the development of multilateral cooperation between the countries of the region on the basis of their interests, capacities, skills and experience. It would be especially counterproductive to try to politicize economic ties in the region and cooperation in the framework of the BSEC.

We believe the BSEC has an excellent future. The organization is a functioning part of the overall European cooperation system and the integration processes on the continent and is able to play a role in bringing the peoples of the region closer together and is finding balance and common ground in the Black Sea region. By strengthening its cooperation with the United Nations, we will further contribute to that progress. Russia fully supports the draft resolution on the matter and has become one of its sponsors.

We also think that cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe is moving along nicely. The development of cooperation between those two organizations will contribute to ensuring peace and security and will protect human rights, not only in Europe but around the world as a whole.

The draft resolution on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe (A/63/L.12), which is being considered by the General Assembly today, fully meets those goals, and we hope that, just as it was two years ago, it will be adopted by consensus.

We would like to see further development of cooperation between the United Nations and other European organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, where mechanisms for reacting to emergencies are being developed. What is essential there is to fully recognize the primary responsibility of the United Nations Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, including the imposition of mandatory sanctions and political control over peace enforcement operations. That fundamental principle based upon Chapter VIII of the Charter should also govern cooperation between the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

We must further increase positive cooperation between the Organization and regional and subregional partners in Africa, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

An important role in seeking peaceful solutions to the many problems of their regions will be played by the League of Arab States, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Organization of American States and various Latin American organizations. Russia has established and is developing dynamic relationships with all of those organizations.

Mr. Menon (Singapore): Allow me to first thank the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for the report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/63/228). We would also like to associate ourselves with the statement made by Thailand on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and commend the Secretary-General for his leadership and support in fostering and strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and ASEAN.

Much of our work in this session has been clouded by bad news. The lack of progress in the Doha Round, the food and fuel price crises, the financial meltdown on Wall Street and the resultant economic turmoil across the globe have all cast a long shadow over our deliberations at the sixty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly. We have had debates on the role that the United Nations can and

should play to restore global confidence during this time of economic, social and political crises. Smaller countries like mine have a strong vested interest in seeing international institutions strengthened, so that they can better deal with the various problems.

While reform of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions is important and urgent, we can also make these international institutions more effective by encouraging them to forge strong partnerships with regional institutions that play useful roles in fostering regional peace and development. Indeed, even the United Nations Charter recognizes the role that regional arrangements can play in helping the United Nations to achieve its various objectives. Take ASEAN as an example: many of you will recall that, when Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in May this year and caused a humanitarian crisis in the country, there was for several days a stand-off between the Myanmar Government and the international community over the provision of assistance. ASEAN had to step in and build a bridge of trust between the Myanmar Government and the international community.

A tripartite organization involving the United Nations, ASEAN and the Myanmar Government worked effectively to overcome problems on the ground and ensured that international aid reached the furthest corners of the affected area. It also prevented a second wave of deaths from hunger or disease. ASEAN on its own did not have the capabilities to help Myanmar in a major way, but ASEAN working together with the United Nations and other international agencies was able to make a huge difference. In the process, we in ASEAN also learned a great deal about disaster management from bodies like the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Programme.

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, it is also a fact that every region has its own distinctive characteristics, which must be taken into account when building partnerships between the United Nations and the particular region. It may or may not be possible to replicate what ASEAN was able to achieve with the United Nations in the case of Cyclone Nargis, in other parts of the globe. In short, there is no one-size-fits-all model for cooperation between the United Nations and regional institutions. To expect otherwise would be to ignore the fact that every region has its own unique characteristics, priorities and needs. The Secretary-General's report makes that point and shows how wide-ranging such models of partnership can be.

Unfortunately, instead of celebrating the rich diversity that exists in the global community, my delegation has observed a tendency on the part of some Member States to try to impose some of their values and practices at the regional level on the rest of the global community. They expect the rest of us to welcome those values and practices, which are peculiar to their region, and to embrace them as universal values.

Some members may recall that, in 2004, my delegation took the floor during the debate on this same agenda item to object to an attempt by the Council of Europe to impose its views regarding the death penalty upon the rest of us through its resolution on cooperation with the United Nations. In that regard, my delegation was baffled by the attempt by the Council of Europe again this year to slip similar and even more controversial elements into its draft resolution and to expect all of us to go along with it. Fortunately, consensus on that resolution was preserved, at least as of now, because the Swedish chair of the informal consultations exercised strong leadership and professional objectivity during the negotiations.

All of us should acknowledge that in a universal organization such as the United Nations, there will be some occasions when we will not necessarily be able to agree with one another because of our different values or practices. Our task will certainly be more complicated if some delegations insist on disregarding the valid concerns of others and attempting to impose their views on the rest of the United Nations membership.

When we are confronted by multiple crises, either at home or at the global level, we should all rise to the challenge and work in collaboration to strengthen the United Nations and regional organizations. This is no time to be running roughshod over each other's views. We can only achieve a "we community" — a concept that the President of the General Assembly has often talked about — when we learn the basic rule of respect and empathy for each other's views, and that has to start here in the Assembly.

Mr. McNee (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is an essential tool for the achievement of the objectives of the United Nations and its various bodies. That cooperation is key to peace and security efforts. The expertise of and means of regional organizations complement those of the United Nations, and thereby enhance the contributions of each.

Canada has established partnerships with various players, such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern Africa Development Community, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Caribbean Community, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), on a host of issues. Those partnerships illustrate the importance we place on the involvement of regional players.

We would also like to reiterate the responsibilities of Member States to support cooperation between the United Nations and various organizations in order to ensure that such cooperation is effective. For example, donors and countries contributing troops to peace missions under the aegis of various organizations must ensure that those troops are endowed with the resources they need to carry out their mandates.

The partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in Darfur illustrates a number of possibilities and demonstrates the challenges which such cooperation poses. That cooperation is still necessary to foster African solutions to threats to peace and security on that continent. Because peace and security in Africa are closely related to the human rights situation, governance and development, extensive cooperation among the relevant bodies of the United Nations and the African Union is also necessary.

I would like to highlight further examples of cooperation with regional partners that are relevant to the United Nations. Canada's working, for example, to develop practical approaches to cooperation with the ASEAN Regional Forum. In addition, we are monitoring the cohesion between the efforts of the OAS and other regional institutions in the Americas. We are also following cooperation efforts between the OAS and all of the parties that support development in Haiti. We would also like to highlight the joint cooperation between the United Nations and NATO in Afghanistan. We welcome the cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE, particularly in Kosovo and Georgia.

The United Nations and regional organizations must also cooperate closely to integrate fragile States into the world economy. The United Nations must also work with regional economic organizations in order to participate in development efforts.

I would like to take this opportunity to specifically address cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF). The OIF has diplomatic capabilities in the areas of prevention and mediation that we would like to see strengthened so that the Organization can help resolve international crises more effectively, particularly in certain francophone countries, and fully participate in finding collective and realistic solutions.

A few days ago, the twelfth francophone summit was held in Quebec City, with some 30 heads of State or Government, the Secretary-General of the OIF and the Secretary-General of the United Nations in attendance. The summit was an opportunity to discuss issues that are mobilizing the international community, such as the financial crisis, and to focus on four other major issues within the francophone world: democracy and the rule of law; governance and economic solidarity; the environment; and the French language.

The heads of State or Government adopted the Quebec City declaration, which contains specific and concrete commitments on each of those major issues. Armenia's status changed from observer to associate member at the summit, and Thailand and Latvia were admitted as observers. The OIF is now comprised of 70 States and Governments.

A high point in cooperation between the United Nations and the francophone world came on 28 March 2008, when the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the OIF reviewed international policy issues and welcomed the similarity of their views on world peace, peaceful conflict resolution, the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and the dialogue among cultures and civilizations. They also expressed the desire to implement operational mechanisms to facilitate consultations, the ability to refer issues to one another

and coordination between the two organizations in the context of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts that may arise in the francophone world.

Cooperation between the two organizations also requires the enhancement of the OIF's involvement in mobilizing francophone contingents in United Nations peacekeeping operations. More than half of the troops deployed by the United Nations are serving in francophone countries. While the number of such missions is increasing, the number of French-speaking personnel engaged in those operations is declining, which is causing communications problems on the ground.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the OIF also necessitates a stronger OIF presence in Peacebuilding Commission activities, in particular in the country-specific configurations for Burundi, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic. Other areas of cooperation, in particular electoral observation and assistance, may also be enhanced.

Finally, cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie is also key to the successful implementation of resolution 61/266, on multilingualism, adopted last year.

Resolution 61/7 currently defines the framework for cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie. In the coming days, Canada will submit a draft resolution designed to update the parameters of that framework in the wake of the recent adoption of the Quebec City declaration a few days ago, with a view to guiding joint activities in the coming years. We are delighted at the thought of seeing the results of that cooperation in the coming months, which will pave the way for the preparations for the next Francophonie summit, to be held in Madagascar in 2010.

(*spoke in English*)

In conclusion, Canada, in cooperation with other Member States, will continue to ensure that cooperation between the two organizations remains productive so that francophone experience is used to the fullest extent in carrying out the United Nations mission, and so that the relationship becomes a model of complementarity between United Nations action and that of regional organizations. Our capacity to manage effectively the wide range of issues facing us will determine how cooperation between the United Nations, especially the Security Council, and regional organizations develops.

Mr. Mansour (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): The debate that brings us together today gives us an excellent opportunity to examine the state of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations and to reflect on how we can strengthen their links of synergy and interaction.

I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for the information he has provided in his summary report on cooperation activities undertaken these past two years (A/63/228). The report clearly shows the genuine will of the United Nations and the regional organizations concerned to consolidate and diversify in various areas and at various levels their cooperation and their capacity to be complementary. My delegation welcomes that fact because it is therein that the objective of full cooperation between United Nations and regional organizations takes on real significance and relevance.

My delegation feels that regional cooperation, the structure and scope of which have become increasingly multidimensional and integrated, is now more than ever a supplementary tool for United Nations action and for the development of multilateralism. Developments on the international scene have clearly shown that the universality of the United Nations and the regional approach can work together towards the same objectives and optimize, upstream and down, their action and capacity to better serve the needs of development, peace and human understanding, and to do so without a conflict of competence or mandate.

Given the growing role that regional organizations play in international governance and in the consensual approach to the situations facing the world, my delegation feels that the organizations involved should, in that respect, be integrated as full partners in the United Nations dynamic. The regional cooperation dimension is also part of the revitalization of the United Nations and the achievement of its development goals, particularly the Millennium Development Goals.

We should remember in that respect that the September 2005 World Summit Outcome Document stressed that aspect by recommending that we identify and adopt measures to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

Moreover, the various biennial reports adopted under item 114 evidence the growing interest that the United Nations community accords to increasing cooperation and coordination and to the added value that the regional organizations provide at various levels.

Additionally, my delegation would like to take advantage of this debate to remind regional organizations to strengthen consultation and cooperation among themselves, since they are guided by the common ideals of peace, development and dialogue among civilizations.

As a member of a number of regional organizations, Tunisia is convinced that such valuable cooperation in various areas should be duly appreciated, better supported and better structured. In that regard, cooperation activities between the United Nations and the League of Arab States — the vitality and strengthening of which we welcome, particularly in the area of peace — should be further extended to other sectors more directly linked to development. In point of fact, a number of meetings and joint activities have taken place, including the coordination meeting in Geneva in July 2008 between the two parties that led to the launching of various projects of common interest in the economic, social, environmental, technical and cultural domains, attesting to the shared will to strengthen institutional links, as well as the scope of and base for cooperation. The follow-up mechanism established on that occasion is certainly an important pillar in the edifice of cooperation. We would have wished that the report of the Secretary-General had given more information with regard to the mandate and the functioning of that mechanism, in particular its ability to make periodic assessments of the status of cooperation.

My delegation welcomes the fact that, over the past two years, cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union has taken on another dimension and opened up new perspectives. There have been many successes, and we are now attempting to address the specific needs of our continent, particularly in the area of peace and conflict management, in keeping with the priorities established in the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union, presented in the declaration Enhancing United Nations-African Union Cooperation: Framework for the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union, the text of which was signed in Addis Ababa in November 2006.

In that respect, the decision to set up a coordination and consultation mechanism between the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the Security Council of the United Nations, as well as joint meetings to be held regularly between those two bodies in that framework undoubtedly meets the needs of our time, given that Africa is the theatre of most conflicts, and particularly since it provides edifying proof that structured, targeted and coordinated cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations can contribute to the creation of an African capacity for conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

By dint of the political sensitivity of its basic structure, cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union on the issues of peace and security has monopolized attention, downplaying other aspects of cooperation — such as economic and social support — that while requiring less involvement and fewer resources, are nevertheless important. The goal is to support the process, of development in particular the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, at the national, regional and subregional levels, especially since Africa is clearly behind with regard to the agreed deadlines.

Before concluding on that point, I would like to stress that my delegation can only welcome the significant efforts of the United Nations and its Member States in the area of peace and security in Africa, and hopes that questions of economic and human development will enjoy the same level of attention and commitment. The development of Africa today is at the heart of the United Nations agenda and of the international community.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in diverse and important economic, political, social and humanitarian fields. The OIC and its specialized agencies are deployed in various domains and with numerous partners in order to contribute to the efforts of the international community in the service of development, peace and security.

In that framework, the international conference convened by the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Tunis in November 2007, in cooperation with the Tunisian Government, on the theme "Terrorism: Dimensions, Threats and

Countermeasures", has enabled us to identify solutions, to recommend paths of action and, in particular, to clear up a good number of misunderstandings at the heart of a certain erroneous perception of Islam. The conference illustrated the extent to which cooperation and exchanges enable us to take the road less travelled and to find common ground on subjects that are apparently controversial or even conflictual.

On another level, the meeting held in Geneva in July 2008 between the United Nations system and the OIC and its specialized institutions enabled us to assess the level of cooperation and where it could be strengthened.

It is a fact that the world today faces many challenges, and the fact that they are getting worse is indisputable. The only way the international community can rise to those challenges is with everyone's help, and a collective commitment. The process of complementarity between the universal action of the United Nations and the constructive contribution of regional organizations itself arises from that imperative.

Ms. Negm (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to start by expressing our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his excellent report on the cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/63/228). Egypt attaches special importance to such cooperation for its significant role in helping to achieve the goals of the United Nations in its three main fields of work: international peace and security, development in its political and economic dimensions, and the effective promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Secretary-General's report demonstrates the depth of the relationship between the United Nations and regional and other organizations and the increasing levels of steady cooperation between them. In that context, the delegation of Egypt welcomes the report's focus on the growing cooperation between United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, on the one hand, and the African Union, on the other, in the areas of peace and security; the African Union's institutional capacity-building; mediation and conflict resolution; the holding of elections; peacekeeping and support in implementing the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programmes; disarmament, especially with respect to small arms and light weapons; and other areas associated with the promotion and development of industry, environmental protection, refugee issues, and food and food security.

In the field of development, cooperation must be strengthened between both parties in order to confront the world's exceptional food, energy, global financial markets and climate change crises. Those crises will affect Africa more than another region. I also wish to stress the need to implement the political declaration issued at the recent high-level meeting of the General Assembly on Africa's development needs as well as the proposals put forward by the leaders at the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals. Those proposals aim at increasing financing for Africa and to give it special consideration during the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus.

In the area of international peace and security, we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to form a joint United Nations-African Union panel, chaired by former Italian Prime Minister Prodi, in support of African peacekeeping operations. We look forward to receiving the panel's report. Concurrently, we emphasize the importance of continuing to strengthen cooperation between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union so that Africa can also contribute to maintaining international peace and security in other regions of the world.

In the same context, I would like to refer to the important role played by the Peacebuilding Commission in African countries emerging from conflict and its achievements during the first two years of its existence. The United Nations and the African Union should encourage, sustain and support the Commission's role. We also stress the need to assist and strengthen the capacities of the Commission by providing the necessary financial resources from the regular budget of the United Nations, and to take the regional dimension of the process of reviewing the work of the Peacebuilding Fund into consideration in 2009 and 2010, in a manner that would help to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union.

Cooperation between the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the United Nations is gaining importance in the light of the negative campaign against Islam and its symbols and of the

efforts of some to defend that campaign by citing freedom of expression. This issue requires both organizations to step up their role in correcting the erroneous image of the Islamic world and in deepening cooperation among all peoples, regardless of their religions and faiths. That, in turn, would require working together in the fields of culture and education through dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions. In that regard, the delegation of Egypt encourages the holding of seminars and conferences in cooperation with the member States of both organizations so that such cooperation will produce concrete results in promoting the culture of peace. It is our hope that the high-level meeting to be held in the middle of this month will constitute a further basis for strengthening cooperation among all countries in that important area.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States is of equal and increasing importance, not only because of the leading role of the United Nations in the process of the peaceful settlement of the Middle East question and its role in the diplomatic Quartet, but also in promoting the international process of addressing the case of the Palestinian refugees and ensuring their access to urgently needed humanitarian assistance, and in confirming the fact that the United Nations remains at the centre of the political process aimed at establishing an independent, viable Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

In that regard, it is necessary to immediately commence the implementation of the agreement between the two organizations to strengthen the institutional links between their secretariats. The process will lead to the sharing of experience and of lessons learned, promote their joint efforts, and enhance their coordination with other regional organizations for the achievement of international peace and security.

Regarding cooperation between the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) and the United Nations, the delegation of Egypt welcomes the consultations between both organizations in the various fields of international law. The Egyptian delegation reiterates and affirms the importance of strengthening such cooperation, especially with respect to the activities of AALCO's Centre for Research and Training to build capacities in the field of international law in all its branches and to ensure effective national implementation of international law obligations.

The delegation of Egypt also affirms the importance of strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie; of expanding it from merely cultural cooperation to cooperation in the fields of early warning, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, peacekeeping capacity-building; and of developing, establishing and implementing national strategies for development and other important areas that would enhance the goals of both organizations.

The delegation of Egypt follows with keen interest the growing cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union since the signing of the 1996 Cooperation Agreement between them; the adoption in 2002 of resolution 57/47 granting the Union observer status; the organization of hearings and common interactive debates on the sidelines of successive sessions of the General Assembly; and the participation of parliamentarians in the official delegations of their countries to the General Assembly. That growing cooperation clearly highlights the nature of the organic relationship between strengthening the principles of democracy, ensuring good governance at the national and international levels and broadening the basis for parliamentary participation in the multilateral international sphere.

Owing to the complexity and multifaceted nature of cooperation between the two organizations with regard to participation in relevant United Nations conferences, issues of international peace and security and efforts to promote and enhance economic and social development, democracy and human rights, and given Egypt's leading role in promoting such cooperation during the chairmanship of Mr. Fathi Sorour, Speaker of the People's Assembly, we support the Secretary-General's recommendation, set out in paragraph 139 of the report, that the General Assembly positively consider devoting a specific agenda item to cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Egypt will participate actively in the consultations on that subject, which will be considered during negotiations on the annual draft resolution on this item.

The delegation of Egypt has closely followed the increasing cooperation between the United Nations and many organizations in Europe, Asia and Latin America,

in particular the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, the Caribbean Community, the Council of Europe and other organizations covered in the report. We will follow up on efforts to enhance such cooperation in the future with a view to achieving the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Mrs. Ithete (Namibia): The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the world organization of national parliaments, is the natural institutional link between the United Nations and the world of national parliaments. Namibia is particularly honoured that The Honourable Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Namibia, was elected as President of the IPU. We believe that his experience as a former Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and President of the General Assembly will certainly contribute to the strengthening of the partnership between the United Nations and the IPU.

In order to bridge the implementation gap with regard to United Nations decisions and resolutions and to ensure greater democratization of the United Nations system, it is important to engage more closely with national parliaments and parliamentarians all over the world. Such engagement would give parliamentarians a better understanding of the importance of translating international commitments into national legislation and policies. It would also provide greater political momentum for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and addressing the major global challenges of our time.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228) goes a long way in highlighting the importance of cooperation among the United Nations system, national parliaments and the IPU. Namibia supports the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report, particularly those related to the circulation of the outcome document of the joint United Nations-IPU annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations as an official United Nations document and the allocation of a separate General Assembly agenda item to explore cooperation among the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU.

As at previous sessions, the General Assembly will be requested to adopt the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU. The draft resolution will, inter alia, encourage the United Nations and the IPU to continue to cooperate closely in various fields — in particular peace and security, economic and social development, international law, human rights and democracy and gender issues — bearing in mind the significant benefits of such cooperation between the two organizations. It will also encourage the IPU's contributions to the work of the General Assembly, including the revitalization of the Assembly, United Nations reform and system-wide coherence. Namibia trusts that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus. We therefore urge Member States to support it.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to inform Member States that Namibia will facilitate the negotiations on the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU. We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Italy on a job well done in facilitating a similar draft resolution in 2006.

Ms. Chen Peijie (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): It is increasingly important that the United Nations, the world's most universal international Organization, enhance its cooperation with other international and regional organizations to address the challenges of globalization and myriad issues in the international arena. The Chinese delegation welcomes the General Assembly's consideration of the important item, "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations". On this occasion, I should like to make some brief comments on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO).

AALCO is the only influential intergovernmental organization that is composed of Asian and African States and dedicated to addressing legal issues. Founded in 1956, it was a major outcome of the famous Bandung Conference of 1955. For more than half a century, AALCO has worked consistently to promote cooperation and exchanges among Asian and African States in the spirit of unity, friendship and cooperation advocated at the Bandung Conference. It assists Asian and African States in the practice of international law and in their efforts to promote the progressive development and codification of such law. Comments and proposals made by AALCO on the relevant items on the agendas of the Sixth Committee and the International Law Commission serve as an important frame of reference for Asian and African States as they participate in discussions on the relevant

General Assembly items and have great reference value for the work of other United Nations legal bodies.

AALCO enjoys good cooperative relations with the United Nations and its relevant organs. Over the years, AALCO and specialized United Nations agencies, such as UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Law Commission, have sent representatives to one another's meetings to actively participate in the consideration of relevant items. As a result, the cooperation among those bodies has been continuously enhanced and broadened.

Asia and Africa have the largest number of developing countries and the largest populations in the world. Thanks to their efforts over many years, Asian and African countries have achieved enormous progress in the political, economic and social fields. Their status and role in international affairs have grown markedly, which has made them an important force for world peace and shared development. As an important platform for exchange and cooperation, AALCO will no doubt play an increasingly positive role in enhancing the effective participation of Asian and African States in promoting democratization and the rule of law in international relations.

As a State member of both the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization, the Chinese Government has consistently supported AALCO's efforts to enhance cooperation and exchanges with the United Nations. From this rostrum, I wish to reiterate that the Chinese Government will, as always, continue to contribute to enhancing cooperation among the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization, the United Nations and other relevant organs.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Uganda, on behalf of the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), on cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC. However, Senegal, in its capacity as Chair of the OIC Summit at its eleventh session, would like to share with the Assembly some of our thoughts with regard to that cooperation.

The important role of regional organizations and others in dealing with the major issues on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly has been reaffirmed many times since this debate began. In point of fact, whether it is terrorism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, peacebuilding, human rights or even humanitarian action, organizations such as the African Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference are well-placed to understand the deep-seated causes and to provide suitable solutions, either because of their knowledge of the region concerned or because of the particular membership of the organizations.

Let me say that it is with the greatest satisfaction that Senegal notes the continued strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and we welcome the attention paid to the important issues on the OIC agenda by His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, as well as his presence in Dakar on 13 March 2008 at the signing of the peace agreement between Chad and the Sudan, which took place on the margins of the OIC Summit. That is a good illustration of that ongoing attention. Added to that is the upcoming high-level meeting of the General Assembly on dialogue here in New York under the auspices of His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, which will provide yet another occasion for those two organizations to strengthen their links.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228) notes in section L of its part II that over and above the relations between the Secretariat and the OIC, the cooperation between that organization and the United Nations has also been extended to other agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, in particular in the form of initiatives taken with UNICEF, the World Meteorological Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We welcome that dynamism, however we also hope that those various areas of cooperation will go beyond simple talks between staff of the respective programmes for each body or agency and actually lead to effective synergies that will have a specific impact on projects on the ground.

In that respect, the OIC's contribution to the World Food Programme in November 2007, the first of its kind, should serve as an example. In that area, Senegal would like to propose that the United Nations, through its competent departments and services, take an active role in the implementation of the OIC programme aimed at providing one half of a million computers to poor countries that are members of the

Organization of the Islamic Conference. Such a programme, if implemented, would constitute a major contribution to the achievement by those countries of the Millennium Development Goals, which are at the heart of the United Nations priorities.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the fact that virtually all of the United Nations interventions in the area of peace and security and humanitarian action are carried out in countries that are also members of the OIC. That shows that these are two preferred areas for the necessary cooperation between those organizations and, for that reason, Senegal will spare no effort during its time in office as Chair of the OIC to increase the number of initiatives and joint actions in those two areas.

Mr. Aligrudić (Serbia): As a State Member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe — of whose Parliamentary Assembly I am a Vice-President — Serbia is a staunch supporter of those organizations. By furthering their goals — the preservation and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law and supporting political, legal and institutional reforms — the Council of Europe and the OSCE make important contributions to conflict prevention, confidence-building and the promotion of peace. Their cooperation with the United Nations is therefore ever so important.

The importance of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations was emphasized at the third Summit of the Council of Europe in Warsaw in 2005. The MDGs, as well as current challenges such as terrorism and other crimes, make it incumbent on the United Nations and the Council of Europe to intensify their cooperation and joint approach, drawing upon hitherto experiences and available resources to deal with those challenges. Those issues help to bring into focus again the validity of the Agreement between the Council of Europe and the United Nations Secretariat signed in 1951.

Cooperation in the field of human rights between the Council of Europe and the United Nations, as well as between the Human Rights Commissioners of the two organizations, should be intensified, particularly in the context of the establishment of international standards and their practical implementation.

Serbia strongly supports the activities of the Council of Europe aimed at promoting respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Kosovo and Metohija, the Serbian province under interim United Nations administration, as well as the Council's activities, aimed at implementing international standards, particularly with respect to members of the non-Albanian communities. All those activities, however, must be designed and implemented in strict compliance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), which provides the only legal basis for the activities of international organizations in Kosovo and Metohija.

Considering that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Council of Europe concluded the Agreement on Technical Arrangements in connection with the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of and National Minorities in August 2004 and that the first monitoring cycle relating to the implementation of the Convention in Kosovo and Metohija was completed by the adoption of a resolution by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 21 June 2006, it is of vital importance to take the appropriate measures contained in the conclusions and recommendations of the resolution. It is equally important to proceed with the provisions of the letter sent by the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe's Framework Convention to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo and Metohija of July 2007 and the report to the Committee on the implementation of the resolution in Kosovo and Metohija. It is all the more important now, as no reply to the letter had been received by May 2008, when a new letter was sent.

Following the conclusion of the Technical Agreement for the implementation of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment between the Council of Europe and UNMIK in August 2004 and the exchange of letters between the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe in 2006, the experts of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture were given the possibility to visit all detention and prison units in Kosovo and Metohija in order to verify whether the provisions of the Convention were being complied with and whether the inspection modalities in the NATO detention units were defined. And the fact that the first visit of the Committee took place in March 2007 provides

eloquent proof that the cooperation of international organizations is needed and is fruitful.

Of exceptional importance to my country are field activities related to the restoration of cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija, particularly those conducted by the Independent International Commission for Cultural Heritage, established by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNMIK in the wake of the March 2004 riots against non-Albanians.

The three years of activity of the Reconstruction Implementation Commission with respect to Serbian sacred places has confirmed the Commission's importance for the successful implementation of cultural heritage projects and the promotion of inter-ethnic cooperation and dialogue. Serbia appreciates very much the fact that the Commission's activities are pursued under the auspices of UNMIK and in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), with the participation of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Serbia particularly appreciates the Council of Europe's contribution to the Commission's work and expects the Council to continue to play its cooperative role.

The question of refugees continues to be an extremely burdensome problem for Serbia and the entire region of South-Eastern Europe. In order to find lasting and sustainable solutions, it is necessary to intensify cooperation between the United Nations, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in order to solve this problem at the regional level, with the full implementation of the Sarajevo Declaration.

Serbia fully supports the continuation of the activities of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and Metohija within its current mandate, under the auspices of UNMIK and on the basis of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). This means that the activities of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo must be status-neutral. It is of particular importance that that Mission not facilitate by its activities the building and functioning of those institutions created through the unilateral declaration of independence of the province. Serbia expects the OSCE Mission in Kosovo to become increasingly engaged in addressing one of the most critical issues for Kosovo and Metohija: the security and status of the non-Albanian ethnic communities which live in very difficult conditions. In that connection, it is necessary that, in addition to developing democratic institutions and the rule of law, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo accentuates in its activities the improvement of the status of the ethnic groups discriminated against. This implies respect for human rights, security, freedom of movement, property and labour rights, health protection and education. We call on the OSCE Mission in Kosovo to devote special attention to communities living in enclaves and to support the Serbian proposal to establish new municipalities which would reduce the level of isolation of the population living in the enclaves.

A comprehensive programme for the sustainable return of internally displaced persons must be drawn up, to which the OSCE Mission in Kosovo may render a significant contribution through cooperation with competent Serbian institutions and international organizations.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo should also support the protection of the property rights and individual tenancy rights of the members of ethnic communities discriminated against; ensure property restitution and compensation for destroyed or inaccessible property; and make sure that the rights of the State of Serbia to privatized property or property to be privatized are respected. There is no doubt that the respect and protection of those rights are among the preconditions for the safe and sustainable return of internally displaced persons to their homes.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo should invest additional efforts in improving the situation of the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija. Those efforts would be particularly important in establishing an appropriate judiciary system in those parts of the province whose population refuses to recognize the secessionist Government.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the question of the destiny of missing persons, namely Serbs and other non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, particularly in the light of the testimony published in the book by Carla Del Ponte, former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. I therefore urge UNMIK to do its utmost to ensure that all cases are properly investigated.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/6 of 17 October 1989, I now call on the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Terry Davis.

Mr. Davis (Council of Europe): Some people argue that a world facing economic turmoil and terrorist threats should have other priorities than human rights. They could not be more wrong.

Recession and terrorism are two very different things, but they both cause insecurity and fear. They both put a strain on relations among people and among peoples. It is at times like these that there is an even greater need for the values of humanity; a greater need for justice, for equality, for solidarity, for tolerance and for mutual respect, both among people and among peoples.

History has taught us a harsh lesson every time this simple truth has been forgotten or ignored. It was with that truth in mind that, 60 years ago, this General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And it was with this truth in mind that, 60 years ago, a group of European countries established the Council of Europe and, two years later, adopted the European Convention on Human Rights.

Today, the General Assembly is discussing draft resolution A/63/L.12, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe. I hope that it will receive the broadest possible support. Its content reflects the work which the Council of Europe is doing to protect, promote and expand in Europe the values and ideals which are common to us all. In our endeavour, the United Nations is a most important and valuable partner. Our cooperation is continuous, close, wide-ranging, specific and meaningful.

The draft resolution contains a more detailed description of where our cooperation stands today and where we would like to take it tomorrow. It refers to our activities, standards, achievements and objectives, about all of which we feel very strongly. Some are universally accepted; others, less so. But they were included to inspire dialogue, not to dictate.

One omission from the draft resolution is a reference to the abolition of the death penalty. At the Council of Europe, we regard the death penalty as one of the most inhumane and degrading forms of punishment. Only one country in Europe, in fact the only European country which is not a member of the Council of Europe, still uses the death penalty and we look forward to its abolition there as well.

This is a good illustration of the fact that Europe is not alone. We know that we are part of the majority here in the United Nations General Assembly. That makes my final point for me: the Council of Europe does not presume to lecture or to impose its ideas and values on the rest of the world; that was the old imperialist attitude of Europe. Today we recognize that we are only one part of the world. We are proud of our values but we are not too proud to admit that we can learn from other continents. We want to work together with the rest of the world to define our common values and translate them into reality. In short, we want to work together with the United Nations to change the world. I hope for the Assembly's support.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/18 of 10 November 1978 and General Assembly decision 53/453 of 18 December 1998, I now call on the permanent observer of the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Mr. Camara (International Organization of la Francophonie) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that I have taken the floor, I should like, on behalf of Mr. Abdou Diouf, Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), and on my own behalf, to congratulate the President of the General Assembly and the other Assembly officers on the trust placed in them to lead the work of the sixty-third session. The Secretary-General of the OIF also requested that I commend His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his excellent relationship with the OIF, for the quality of his report (A/63/228) and for his constant availability. Indeed, the two Secretaries-General have met three times in less than two years, which attests to the excellent relations between the two organizations.

I thank the Group of Francophone Ambassadors, who, since the moment that I arrived, have made me feel welcome and have given me all the individual and collective support that an organization can expect from its members. In particular, I congratulate the representatives of Latvia and the Kingdom of Thailand, which recently joined the OIF. On behalf of the OIF Secretary-General, I assure them that they will find friendship and solidarity there.

Because of the comprehensiveness of the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228) regarding

cooperation between the United Nations and the OIF. I need not list the significant results achieved in that area over the past two years. As members will have noted in the report, the OIF's activities seek to strengthen the pillars of the United Nations: security, development and human rights.

I should like to quickly emphasize the areas in which the OIF would particularly like to highlight its cooperation with the United Nations in the coming years: consolidating activities related to early warning, preventive diplomacy and the OIF's mediation at a seminar following up on the Paris meeting, which was mentioned this morning; further strengthening the peacekeeping capacities of French-speaking States and encouraging them to contribute military contingents that include police and civilian components; increasing electoral assistance and monitoring to consolidate the rule of law and assist democratic transitions; and promoting swifter ratification of major international instruments, in particular the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by all French-speaking countries and whose twentieth anniversary will be commemorated in 2009.

The OIF regrets the fact that the francophone community is affected by several crisis situations. We are convinced of the added value of our organization and its ability to make a specific contribution to the resolution of those crises in accordance, of course, with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the sovereignty of States.

Therefore, in close cooperation with the United Nations, the OIF will strive to increase its efforts to promote the rule of law and the restoration of constitutional order whenever necessary, in conformity with the Bamako Declaration; to promote implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement as well as stability in Chad, the Great Lakes region, Lebanon and Haiti; and to assist the inclusive political dialogue process in the Central African Republic.

The OIF participates actively in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission within its country-specific configurations for Burundi, the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau. Here, we commend the respective Chairs of those configurations and the Peacebuilding Support Office.

The Quebec summit, which was, as recalled earlier, the first North-South forum of heads of State or Government to meet following the outbreak of the financial crisis, called for reform of the international financial system through efforts to find sustainable and viable solutions within inclusive forums, taking into account the concerns and sensitivities felt in all regions throughout the world. In that regard, the OIF commends the initiative of the President of the General Assembly to establish an expert group to express independent views in relevant forums. The OIF hopes that French-speaking experts will be more closely involved in seeking solutions to that terrible crisis.

Given the seriousness of environmental challenges and climate change, the OIF reaffirms its support for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Road Map. We are working towards the common goal of at least a 50 per cent reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and are continuing, within the framework of the negotiations under United Nations auspices, to seek a global consensus on concrete objectives more closely aligned with the scenarios formulated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Based on the shared values of peace, democracy, the rule of law and human rights, as well as the sharing of the French language, the OIF is particularly sensitive to respect for the status of languages. That demand and that vigilance, which we share with all other linguistic groups, is reflected in the implementation of resolution 61/266, on multilingualism, which is understood as achieving parity among the six official languages of the Organization and between the two working languages of the Secretariat. The twofold commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Year of Languages highlights all the meaning and importance of that principle.

The Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, has already shown the way forward. Within a very short period of time, by virtue of his personal commitment and political resolve, he has made statements that have taken into account the reality of diversity. Can the Secretary-General's example be followed and strengthened to serve the peoples of the United Nations?

In addition to his personal commitment, the Secretary-General followed up on one of the General Assembly's recommendations by appointing Mr. Kiyotaka Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, as Coordinator for Multilingualism to strengthen the United Nations as a forum to set a global agenda. The OIF congratulates Mr. Akasaka and assures him of its availability and support. Promoting diversity illustrates the old adage: instead of being right alone, let us be right together; let us prefer being right collectively to being right individually.

The women and men who, in the silence of booths and behind computer keyboards, are busy manipulating countless documents — those without whom conferences and seminars would be monotonous and monolingual and who work tirelessly to enable us to understand and listen to one another — those women and men, the translators, interpreters, editors, proofreaders and supervisors of the language and conference services of the United Nations system, who restore to the world its plural identity and linguistic diversity, deserve our undivided attention and full consideration. On behalf of the International Organization of la Francophone, I salute them.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/2 of 13 October 1980, I now call on the observer for the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization.

Mr. Narinder Singh (Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization): It is my privilege and honour, on behalf of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) and in my capacity as President of the forty-seventh session of AALCO, to address this Assembly, the most representative and democratic forum of the world.

I extend my sincere congratulations to the Assembly President and to his colleagues in the Bureau on their elections to those high offices. We are confident that, with his wisdom and experience, he will steer the session to a very successful outcome.

The Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization was one of the tangible outcomes of the historic Bandung Conference, which took place in 1955. It linked together States of the Asian and African regions, sending a message to the world that whatever may be the differences in our political, economic or legal systems, we are inextricably linked together as an Asian-African identity. That message of Bandung has had a lasting appeal, which for years has brought Asian-African countries together in various world forums.

AALCO has been promoting Asian-African cooperation on legal matters during the 52 years of its existence. The organization was originally founded by seven States and has grown over time to comprise 47 member States and two observers. We look forward to enlarging our membership even further, so that we may become more representative and better promote the views and concerns of the member States of the region. I take this opportunity to call upon other countries from Asia and Africa to consider becoming members of AALCO.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1) acknowledged that many of today's threats recognize no national boundaries, are interlinked and must be tackled at the global, regional and national levels in accordance with the Charter and international law, and that regional and other organizations can play a key role in helping the United Nations face those global challenges. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations should seek to capitalize on the strength of each organization and should be complementary.

AALCO complements the work of the United Nations in the progressive development and codification of international law. AALCO provides an opportunity to a large number of Asian and African countries to contribute actively to the strengthening of the rule of law in international relations. It has undertaken various studies on international legal issues of common concern and has, in cooperation with the United Nations, played a significant role in harmonizing the positions of Asian and African countries in the legal area.

AALCO held its forty-sixth and forty-seventh annual sessions in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2007 and New Delhi, India, in 2008, respectively, and during those sessions a number of items on our agenda complemented the work of the United Nations. At both those sessions, we considered the work of the International Law Commission, the law of the sea, the status and treatment of refugees, cooperation against trafficking in women and children, human rights, terrorism, the environment and the United Nations Convention against Corruption. At the Cape Town

session, we focused special attention on the ongoing Doha Round of trade negotiations and on international cooperation in countering terrorism, while at the New Delhi session, the topic for special consideration was issues in international humanitarian law.

The forty-seventh session of AALCO gave rise to mandates that are pertinent to the work of the United Nations. For example, the secretariat has been asked to conduct a study to find durable solutions to refugee problems. On international terrorism, the AALCO Secretary-General is exploring the possibility of holding a workshop in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to deal with legal aspects of countering terrorism. The secretariat is considering preparing model legislation to implement the United Nations Convention against Corruption of 2003, while the work on model legislation against trafficking in persons, especially women and children, is well on its way to completion.

The topic of climate change was a priority issue at our most recent session, and the secretariat has been mandated to follow up on the ongoing negotiations for an international agreement on stronger action on climate change for the period beyond 2012, as laid down in the Bali Action Plan. In addition, AALCO will hold a one-day seminar entitled "Sixty Years of the International Law Commission" in New Delhi on 2 December 2008. The wide range of topics on AALCO's agenda clearly illustrates the capacity of the organization to contribute positively to collective efforts aimed at tackling the new challenges facing the international community.

In order to assist in the teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law in the Asian-African region, AALCO has launched an annual training programme on general international law, whose first session will run from 3 to 14 November 2008 at its headquarters in New Delhi. We hope to strengthen that programme further with the support of the relevant United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations University and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, with which we are working closely.

We need to mobilize all our resources to address the tremendous global challenges facing humankind. Undoubtedly, strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is a key element in that respect. Expanding relations between the United Nations and AALCO could also serve that objective and contribute to fulfilling the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

In conclusion, may I express our hope and expectation for enhanced future cooperation between our two organizations in all areas of common concern and in the best interests of our Member States. Finally, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/63/228) on the subject.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I now call on the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, His Excellency Mr. Anders Johnsson.

Mr. Johnsson (Inter-Parliamentary Union): Last month, Sir, one of the predecessors of the President of the General Assembly and today the Speaker of the Parliament of Namibia, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, was elected President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). He has asked me to deliver these remarks on his and the IPU's behalf and to assure the President that he looks forward to working very closely with him in strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

As the latest report (A/63/228) of the United Nations Secretary-General amply attests, cooperation between our two organizations over the past two years has been substantive and widespread. It has covered international peace and security, development, finance and trade, democracy, gender and human rights.

I do not propose to dwell on the details of this broad agenda, but I would like to highlight a few points of particular relevance for our future work together. Two years ago the General Assembly adopted an ambitious resolution (resolution 61/6) on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) which welcomed the efforts, then under way, for a greater parliamentary contribution to the work of the United Nations. It urged the IPU to play an active role in relation to the newly established United Nations bodies, in particular the Peacebuilding Commission, the Development Cooperation Forum and the Human Rights Council. I am pleased to report that good progress is being made on all of these fronts.

Since then, the IPU has been working closely with the Peacebuilding Commission, based on the common understanding that a key prerequisite for

lasting peace is the establishment of strong institutions of good governance. From this perspective, the institution of parliament, as a forum for national reconciliation where political parties from the majority and opposition can forge a consensus on national development objectives, requires particular attention. The IPU will continue to work with the Commission, with a view to more fully engaging national parliaments in the countries under consideration by the Commission in efforts to promote democratic governance, national dialogue and reconciliation. At the risk of stating the obvious, I will add that democracy will not flourish in a country where the parliament is neglected.

The IPU is also closely following the work of the Human Rights Council, particularly as it relates to the universal periodic review of the fulfilment of human rights obligations and commitments by United Nations Member States. As I speak here today, members of parliamentary human rights bodies are meeting at IPU headquarters in Geneva for discussions with the Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop a programme of action for parliamentary participation in the review. This is part of our work to secure deeper involvement by parliaments everywhere in the international human rights monitoring and follow-up mechanisms. It means involving members of parliament at an early stage when the periodic country reports to be submitted to the United Nations are being drafted. It involves submitting the conclusions and recommendations that emanate from those main monitoring bodies to parliament for further consideration and action by them, and it involves consolidating the oversight function of parliament as it relates to the implementation of international commitments.

As far as the Economic and Social Council Development Cooperation Forum is concerned, the IPU has played a part in shaping its agenda and working procedures. In June we convened the parliamentary segment of a Stakeholder Forum on the role of national and local stakeholders in contributing to aid quality and effectiveness. Its report was introduced to the Development Cooperation Forum at its first substantive session here in New York this July, and it helped influence the outcome of the third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. Indeed, the Accra Agenda for Action speaks clearly about the responsibility of parliaments to help design national development plans, ensuring greater transparency in public financial management and overseeing sound mutual assessment reviews.

The Secretary-General's report offers many examples of the IPU helping to mobilize parliaments in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The newly elected IPU President, who, as President of the General Assembly, presided over the drafting of the Millennium Declaration, is committed to redoubling that effort. Under his leadership, the IPU will also pursue the parliamentary campaign that it launched last year to build political momentum in support of the current negotiations to address climate change.

General Assembly resolution 61/6 also called for the development, as joint United Nations-Inter-Parliamentary Union events, of the annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations and other specialized parliamentary meetings in the context of major United Nations conferences. Each year we hold a parliamentary meeting during the annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women, seeking to mobilize parliamentary action on the main issue under consideration by the Commission. This year's high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS was accompanied by an IPU-United Nations Development Programme-UNAIDS organized parliamentary meeting that yielded some very practical policy recommendations for parliaments. This is the second year that the annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations will be convened jointly by the President of the United Nations General Assembly and the President of the IPU. One of the subjects on our agenda for the hearing this November is the responsibility to protect, on which we expect a lively and constructive exchange of views. The United Nations Secretary-General recommends, in his report, that the report of this hearing be circulated as an official United Nations document, a proposal with which, needless to say, the IPU concurs. We very much hope that we can rely on your support as well.

Last week the President convened an interactive panel discussion for the General Assembly on the subject of the global financial crisis. Two weeks earlier, members of the 154 parliaments represented in the IPU held a similar debate on the occasion of the 119th IPU Assembly. The resolution they adopted on that occasion calls for a truly global and multilateral response to a crisis that extends far beyond the world of finance. The resolution refers repeatedly to the need

to ensure justice, transparency and accountability. It calls on parliaments to make sure that safeguards are in place to avoid the emergence of similar crises in the future and, more generally, it invites parliaments to exercise greater democratic oversight of finance and the economy. The resolution also exhorts Governments to remain vigilant, notwithstanding the crisis, in meeting international commitments to implement the MDGs and similar internationally agreed development goals. It concludes by giving us a mandate to organize, as soon as possible, a global parliamentary conference to examine the causes of the crisis and to suggest avenues for dealing with its consequences. We very much hope to be able to count on your support and cooperation when we carry this proposal forward.

When the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session took up office, he singled out democratization of the United Nations as one of the main themes for consideration by the General Assembly in the year ahead. We can only welcome his decision, as it is a theme to which the IPU itself has been paying considerable attention.

Two years ago, when we last addressed the General Assembly on the question of cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU, the second World Conference of Speakers of Parliament had recently taken place here at United Nations Headquarters in this very Hall. The parliamentary leaders then issued a political declaration entitled "Bridging the democracy gap in international relations: A stronger role for parliaments". They expressed support for United Nations reform, including the revitalization of the General Assembly and a more representative Security Council, and they gave voice to the need to make the United Nations more democratic and accountable to the people it serves throughout the world. They suggested that cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU needed to be significantly strengthened and developed into a strategic partnership for that to happen.

As the Secretary-General's report suggests, this agenda can be advanced through a regular exchange between the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the senior leadership of the IPU, with a view to building greater coherence in the work of the two organizations. However, it also needs to be placed at the forefront of deliberations here at the United Nations. The IPU is ready to engage in such a discussion, and we invite the General Assembly to join us. In his report, the Secretary-General suggests that the Assembly may wish to devote a specific agenda item to this issue. We trust that Member States will be ready to support this proposal. It would be one important way in which the Assembly can advance its agenda of democratizing the United Nations.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/5 of 8 October 1999, I now call on His Excellency Mr. Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos, Secretary General of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

Mr. Chrysanthopoulos (Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization): The foundations of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) were laid down in 1992 as a political initiative for economic cooperation in the wake of tremendous changes that had taken place in the world. It was a period following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The founding fathers of BSEC wanted to create an organization that could promote peace and stability in the Black Sea region through prosperity.

In those 16 years, BSEC has become a forum for discussion and cooperation in a wide range of areas, namely, energy, transport, trade and economic development, small and medium-sized enterprises, environment, tourism, culture, education, science and technology, telecommunications, pharmaceutics, agriculture, emergency relief and elimination of the consequences of natural and human-made disasters, as well as combating organized crime and terrorism.

Furthermore, BSEC has built a permanent and extensive institutional framework of cooperation that covers all levels of governance. BSEC has also elaborated binding agreements and common action plans on key issues of regional cooperation. The Agreement on Combating Organized Crime and its protocols, the agreements on cooperation in emergency situations and the agreements on simplification of visa procedures for business-people and for professional lorry driver nationals are some examples.

Today, BSEC is in the process of implementing regional projects of major significance for the Black Sea region, as well as for the Eurasian region. These include the Black Sea Ring Highway project and the project on the development of the motorways of the sea in the BSEC region. The memoranda of understanding related to those projects were signed in 2007. The two projects pertain to the development of transport links in

the region. They are expected to do much to foster intra-BSEC trade, as well as tourism, infrastructure, transport investments and economic prosperity among the countries of the Black Sea. Most importantly, they will make a concrete positive difference in the lives of the people of the region and bring them closer together — which should be an objective of all international and regional organizations.

The Black Sea Ring Highway project envisages a four-lane ring highway system, approximately 7,100 kilometres long, to connect BSEC member States with one another. The project on the development of the motorways of the sea in the BSEC region concerns strengthening the maritime links among the ports of BSEC member States. That project will make the Black Sea smaller by creating the necessary infrastructure for better connecting the Black Sea ports and the Black Sea with the Mediterranean and the Caspian Seas.

At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly, by its resolution 54/5 of 8 October 1999, granted observer status to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. Subsequently, General Assembly resolution 55/211 of 20 December 2000, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, opened up new avenues for BSEC to develop working relationships with other organizations within the United Nations system and beyond.

Since then, BSEC has signed cooperation agreements with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). BSEC has also developed cooperation with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

I wish to give a brief summary of the development of relations between BSEC and the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system during the 2007-2008 period. Within the framework of our cooperation with UNDP, the Black Sea Trade and Investment Promotion Programme (BSTIP) was launched in December 2006. BSTIP is the first partnership project between UNDP and BSEC and the first programme jointly financed by Turkey and Greece under the auspices of UNDP.

The overall aim of the Programme is to support economic growth and development in the Black Sea subregion through closer economic integration and to expand intraregional trade and investment links among BSEC member States. BSTIP is expected to have a positive impact on the reduction of poverty as well. New partnerships will be developed with business support organizations. The beneficiaries of BSTIP are small and medium-sized enterprises and special emphasis is given to enterprises managed by young and women entrepreneurs. The Programme is being implemented in cooperation with local chambers of commerce and business support organizations in each of the BSEC countries.

As far as our cooperation with UNODC is concerned, the first joint BSEC-UNODC project has just recently been completed. The BSEC Regional Action Plan for Strengthening the Criminal Justice Response to Trafficking in Persons in the Black Sea Region is a concrete product of that cooperation. That BSEC Regional Action Plan aims at promoting expertise and best practices exchange as well as enhancing cooperation among BSEC member States in combating human trafficking. Along with its policy development and capacity-building aspects, the Action Plan gives special consideration to three basic elements in fighting human trafficking, namely, prevention, protection and prosecution.

As part of our cooperation with IOM, we recently completed a joint BSEC-IOM project on migration management. A concrete outcome of that cooperation was that the Migration Policy Recommendations for the Black Sea Region were developed and adopted by BSEC. The main purpose of the Recommendations is to encourage the creation of a framework for BSEC member States for sharing expertise and best practices in migration policies in view of preventing irregular migration flows and simultaneously facilitating legal ones. The establishment of cooperation between BSEC and UNIDO's International Centre for Hydrogen Energy Technology is another positive development.

I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his factual report on the status of cooperative relationships between BSEC and various United Nations organizations during 2007 and 2008 (A/67/228). We appreciate his recommendation that the

United Nations, the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system should continue to hold consultations with BSEC and formulate and implement joint programmes pertaining to fields of common interest.

On 25 June 2007, BSEC celebrated its fifteenth anniversary with a summit in Istanbul. Almost all heads of State or Government of BSEC member States attended. This high level of participation was a reflection of the political support provided by the member States as well as the strong credibility of the organization.

One of the most important conclusions of the summit, which finds its reflection in the summit declaration, concerns the redefinition of the focus and priorities of BSEC in certain areas of cooperation where we can derive tangible results, such as environmental protection, trade, transport, tourism, energy, telecommunications, science and technology and the fight against all forms of organized crime.

In the declaration, the heads of State and Government of BSEC member States reiterated their commitment to contribute to the attainment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals at national, regional and global levels and instructed the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to examine possible steps for the achievement of those goals in the BSEC region. Within that framework, cooperation is envisaged with UNICEF and UNDP.

The consequences of the ongoing global financial crisis are of concern to all of us. Measures need to be taken by all BSEC member States to safeguard their financial institutions so that economic development in the BSEC region is not impeded. The BSEC Working Group on Banking and Finance will be convened on 18 November to assess the situation.

This assessment will allow the member States that have taken measures to protect their financial institutions to share that information with those member States that have not yet been affected at the same level by the financial crisis.

The global food crisis is one of the themes in the debate at this session of the General Assembly, and it is also being addressed by our organization. Within the BSEC working group on agriculture and agro-industry, BSEC member States have considered the situation concerning the consequences of the increase in food prices and the actions that may be undertaken in order to reverse such an increase. Acknowledging that the increase in food prices is a worldwide trend that affects both developed and developing countries, the working group identified various causes that lead to the increase.

In addition to our efforts to achieve food security, another area where BSEC wishes to contribute is the improvement of respect, understanding and cooperation among nations and peoples of different cultures and religions and to counter the forces that fuel polarization. We believe that any effort in this direction is valuable in promoting sustained peace, security and stability. It is within this framework that BSEC has decided to open exploratory contacts with the Alliance of Civilizations.

Before concluding, I would like to pay tribute to the Republic of Albania, the previous chair-in-office of BSEC, for drafting and introducing the draft resolution that is now before the General Assembly (A/63/L.9). I also wish to thank the sponsors of the text and hope it will be adopted by consensus. Adoption of this draft resolution will give new impetus to BSEC's cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies and others in the pursuit of the objectives and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations as well as those contained in the BSEC charter. BSEC will continue to play its role with determination in efforts to strengthen multilateral cooperation to meet the global challenges of this millennium.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 477(V) of 1 November 1950, I now call on the Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States.

Mr. Mahmassani (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to commend Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the report that he has presented to this session (A/63/228) on the close and multifaceted cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations in confronting the challenges and risks posed to international peace and security.

The League of Arab States and its specialized agencies are working on continuing and intensifying their various facets of cooperation with the United

Nations, as set forth in the Secretary-General's report. The most recent meeting between representatives of the United Nations and the League of Arab States took place in Geneva in early July 2008 and covered several political issues. It also discussed and proposed joint projects in the economic, environmental, social, humanitarian, cultural and technical fields, as well as in the area of capacity-building. In addition, participants agreed to form a mechanism to follow up United Nations and Arab League resolutions; bolster institutional ties between their two secretariats so as to exchange experience, expertise and lessons learned; and raise the level of joint efforts for conflict prevention.

The United Nations Secretary-General has supported the Arab League's initiative and proposals to end the political crisis in Lebanon. Cooperation between the two organizations over the Iraqi issue has primarily focused on establishing and activating an expanded regional dialogue that was initiated in Sharm el-Sheikh in 2007. The Arab League has also cooperated closely with the United Nations on the launching and implementation of the International Compact with Iraq. This cooperation involves several joint undertakings, including projects in the fields of commerce, investment, finance, agriculture, water, sustainable development and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In the field of industrial development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization has been cooperating with the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization and the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization. Projects related to the environment have included implementation of the sustainable development initiative in the Arab region, as well as efforts to implement resolutions of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

In addition, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), together with the Arab League, has implemented a special capacity-building project in the field of evaluating development strategies aimed at achieving the MDGs in the Arab region. Last March, DESA, working in collaboration with the Western Asia regional office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Arab League, organized, in Abu Dhabi the first Round Table Meeting of Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Arab Region. Participants stressed the importance of cooperation between the two organizations and the need to build confidence in the dialogue among civilizations, as well as bolster their alliance and maintain the values of peaceful coexistence and human dignity.

In this context, the Alliance of Civilizations signed a memorandum of understanding with the Arab League in order to encourage cooperation in various fields, including an initiative to support human rights, tolerance and the exchange of new practices, as well as finding opportunities to enrich dialogue between different cultures and religions.

The Arab League's efforts to intensify full cooperation with the United Nations in all fields makes it eager to continue consultations and discussions in order to search for all possible ways and means to guarantee the implementation of all resolutions issued by the Organization, whether related to disarmament, combating terrorism or to the peaceful settlement of conflict.

The most important priority for the Arab League is to find a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. Strengthening cooperation between the two organizations will reinforce ongoing efforts to confront international dangers and challenges and maintain international peace and security. Moreover, it would guarantee a Middle East region free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy.

Cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations emanates from a deep-rooted traditional Arab culture which calls for tolerance and peaceful coexistence with others through dialogue among civilizations. The draft resolution to be presented to the General Assembly under this agenda item, on cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States (A/63/L.20), would strengthen the principles of cooperation between the two organizations.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 114 and its sub-items (a) to (u).

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/63/L.7, A/63/L.9, A/63/L.10, A/63/L.11, A/63/L.12 and A/63/L.13.

Draft resolution A/63/L.7 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction the following countries have become sponsors: the Congo, Gabon, Syrian Arab Republic and Mongolia. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.7?

Draft resolution A/63/L.7 was adopted (resolution 63/10).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/63/L.9 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction the following countries have become sponsors: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Montenegro and Serbia. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.9?

Draft resolution A/63/L.9 was adopted (resolution 63/11).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/63/L.10 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction the following countries have become sponsors: Belize, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica and Panama. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.10?

Draft resolution A/63/L.10 was adopted (resolution 63/12).

The Acting President: We shall now turn to draft resolution A/63/L.11, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cambodia, China, Congo, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Myanmar, New Zealand, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

United States of America

Draft resolution A/63/L.11 was adopted by 64 votes to 1 (resolution 63/13).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, the Netherlands, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the United Kingdom advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/63/L.12 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.12?

Draft resolution A/63/L.12 was adopted (resolution 63/14).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/63/L.13 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.13?

Draft resolution A/63/L.13 was adopted (resolution 63/15).

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus to speak in explanation of position.

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus welcomes the adoption of draft resolution A/63/L.12, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe. In the resolution, the General Assembly rightly pays tribute to the Council of Europe for its advancement and protection of human rights, including for its work on the issue of trafficking in human beings.

We are happy to see mention of the entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. However, the list of parties to that important document and to a number of other international treaties of the Council of Europe on issues of combating crime is in fact limited to the member States of the Council of Europe. Because of various circumstances, not all States that could and would wish to make a meaningful contribution to achieving the goals of the Convention have access to the mechanisms of cooperation contained in it.

One means of developing cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, especially in combating human trafficking, would be for the United Nations to promote a global plan of action on that topic. As is the case with the aforementioned Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, not all States are parties to other international documents in the area of combating human trafficking, including the Palermo Protocol to Prevent Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. We believe that a United Nations plan of action to combat human trafficking, designed to draw in all Member States, could combine valuable experience in the implementation of various regional and international documents in that area in a clear and open plan for multilateral cooperation, with a genuinely global nature.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-items (b), (d), (g), (j), (m) and (t) of agenda item 114?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 114 and its sub-items (a), (c), (e), (f), (h), (i), (k), (l), (n) to (s) and (u).

The Acting President: Before proceeding to the next item on our agenda, I would like to appeal to those Member States intending to submit draft resolutions on the remaining sub-items to do so as soon as possible.

Agenda item 59

Holocaust remembrance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/316)

Ms. Halpern (United States of America): Albert Einstein once said "The world is a dangerous place to live, not because of the people who are evil but because of the people who don't do anything about it". Einstein was referring to the deafening silence that prevailed throughout the world while the Holocaust — the systematic slaughter of innocents by the Nazis — was taking place.

The lessons of the Holocaust are as real in our day as they were 70 years ago, on the eve of Kristallnacht. In every generation tyrants rise up to test the will of the world. They know from studying the rise of Hitler that it is possible to promise unspeakable acts of violence and yet not be opposed. They know that the world has the capacity to stand by and let evil flourish. But they must also know that we too have studied history and that we too have learned lessons from it. The passage of resolution 60/7 by the General Assembly three years ago, on 1 November 2005, is proof of that. That resolution sets a new course for international action to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust and to confront the threat of genocide in our own day.

The United States welcomes the release of the Secretary-General's recent report on the United Nations Outreach Programme and is pleased to acknowledge the excellent work done so far to implement the full range of activities called for by

resolution 60/7. The efforts to educate, conduct outreach and help raise generations free from the bonds of hatred are much needed and form the basis of the work of the United Nations at all levels.

The Outreach Programme is to be commended for the creative platforms it has used in order to reach across the broad spectrum of diverse societies, including seminars, briefings and round tables, online educational curricula, film screenings, exhibits and concerts. Such an all-encompassing approach to Holocaust remembrance will prove to be indispensable to the education of today's young people to the dangers inherent in hatred and bigotry and to the horrors of what humankind is capable of doing to one another.

The United States is proud to be a committed participant in those Outreach Programme efforts. American educators, film-makers, musicians, institutes of higher education, museums and foundations have contributed their resources and talents to the success of this Programme.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for example, has been an active partner with the United Nations Programme. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has organized training seminars for United Nations information officers serving in the field. The work of memorializing the Holocaust and the prevention of future genocides must be an abiding concern for all free nations because the threat in our own time is very real.

The same underlying issues of State-sponsored hatred and intolerance which led to the Holocaust are as dangerous today as they were then. The false and anti-Semitic libels that flourished in Europe before the Second World War now find new audiences throughout the world. The dignity and value of each individual must be respected and protected in order to prevent future acts of genocide. The Outreach Programme and all of the countries that have participated to date are to be commended for their tireless efforts in spreading that message.

Despite the adoption of resolution 60/7, it remains inexplicable that one of the Member States, Iran, continues to insist upon denying the truth of the Holocaust. As the United States has stated many times before, to deny the Holocaust is tantamount to approving the extermination of the Jewish people in particular, and to approving genocide in general. That is unacceptable and unconscionable.

If the denial of the Holocaust does prove anything, it is that the lessons of that incomprehensible, tragic event in human history remain unlearned. It is for that reason that the Outreach Programme is especially important. We hope that the Programme will continue to expand and provide the necessary resources to counter intolerance and hatred while promoting understanding and respect. The United Nations will continue to support that essential mission.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon could not have been more correct in stating that it is not enough to remember, honour and grieve for the dead. As we do, we must also educate, nurture and care for the living. We must foster in our children a sense of responsibility so that they can build societies that protect and promote the rights of all civilians.

It is a simple truth, an eternal truth and a truth worth defending against all those who seek to infringe upon it. For if we do not affirm and protect the right of every human being to live in a world free from baseless hatred, racism and bigotry, we can never claim to be an organization of united nations.

Ms. Shalev (Israel): At the outset, please allow me to thank the President for convening this meeting.

One week from today, the United Nations will mark the 70th anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogrom — the Night of Broken Glass — a single night that served as a prelude to the Holocaust. On that night, organized gangs of Nazi rioters and their supporters rampaged throughout Germany, destroying more than a thousand synagogues, as well as thousands of Jewish shops and businesses. In the massive pogrom, Jews were murdered and many thousands more were sent to concentration camps.

The anniversary we commemorate is one of many activities of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme. It has been organized since its inception, following the adoption in November 2005 of resolution 60/7, entitled "Holocaust remembrance".

The resolution was a historic and universal achievement that signalled the first acknowledgement by the United Nations of the tragedy that befell the Jewish people during the years of the Second World War. Indeed, other peoples, cultures and nations also suffered severely from Nazi atrocities. However, let us not forget that no other nation lost such an enormous

proportion of its people as did the Jewish people. In the words of Elie Weisel, "Not all victims were Jews. But all Jews were victims".

The Secretary-General's report before us (A/63/316) details the impressive work of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme of the Department of Public Information, under the leadership of Mr. Kiyo Akasaka and his predecessor, Mr. Shashi Tharoor. Israel commends their valuable work and dedication and will continue to support and cooperate with Mr. Akasaka and his staff.

The State of Israel and the Jewish people appreciate the historic resolution unanimously adopted by the General Assembly three years ago regarding Holocaust remembrance. Yet the resolution and the Secretary-General's report are not ends unto themselves. Holocaust remembrance must be a dynamic and ongoing effort that requires our commitment to adapting the lessons of the Nazi genocide to evolving threats in our times.

Thus, we cannot ignore the troubling reality that today — more than 60 years after the Holocaust — we have heard from this very rostrum a leader of a Member State who calls for the destruction of another Member State and denies the historical realities of the Holocaust. In this Hall, all Member States swore: "Never again". It is therefore incumbent upon us not merely to condemn such statements, but to act immediately and with resolve against a Member State whose leaders declare such despicable and dangerous words. For in the end, the Nazi Holocaust did not begin in the gas chambers. That is where it ended. The Nazi Holocaust began with the dangerous words of men.

Israel wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his work, as detailed in the report, and my delegation continues to offer its assistance to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust continue to promote peace, coexistence and tolerance.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Humankind recalls the terrible crimes of Nazism with indignation and grief. The bloodiest of those crimes was the Holocaust. In my country, we remember those who fell victim to Nazism, including the six million killed in the Holocaust, half of whom were citizens of the Soviet Union.

Russia considers the Holocaust to be not only the national tragedy of the Jewish people, but a catastrophe of humankind as a whole. Current and future generations must understand who encouraged that horrific crime and who committed it. It is unacceptable to whitewash the actions of those who participated in the crimes of Nazism and were condemned by the Nuremberg trials, first and foremost, the members of the Schutzstaffel, the ideologues and executors of the Holocaust.

Thus we are very worried about the chauvinistic and pro-Nazi tendencies in certain countries, which pose a threat to democracy and human rights. In civilized countries, it must be unacceptable to glorify the memory of Fascism's accomplices — the legionaries of the Waffen SS and other collaborators — who destroyed the lives of hundreds of thousands of peaceful citizens, prisoners of war and concentration camp internees. It is also our responsibility to pay tribute to all the soldiers who died freeing Europe from Fascism and who saved the Jews and other peoples from slavery and complete destruction. Let us not forget those who freed the prisoners from Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek, Treblinka and other death camps.

At the same time, we are seeing cynical attempts to rewrite history around the world. In some countries that declare themselves democratic, the days of victory over fascism are considered days of tragedy. Memorials to those who fought fascism are demolished. Monuments are erected and official decorations awarded to those who fought for fascism during the war and whose hands are drenched in the blood of innumerable innocent victims. Furthermore, in many States the accomplices of fascism and those who were directly responsible for putting Nazism's racial theories into practice are often seen as representatives of national liberation movements and freedom fighters for their countries. Thus, the very concept of such movements is desecrated, since they are considered to be undertaken in the name of racial purification. We believe that such an approach to be an insult to the historic memory of peoples, especially to those who fought against fascism.

The Second World War cost 50 million people their lives. Having overcome the scourge of Nazism, the world paid too high a price to have to accept attempts to revive it 60 years after the war that led to the creation of the United Nations. We need to be very vigilant in the face of attempts to revive the ideology that led to the Holocaust and uncompromising in combating neo-Nazism and other forms of racism.

That is why the Russian Federation requested that, at this session of the General Assembly, a draft resolution to be submitted to the Third Committee on the inadmissibility of certain practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (A/C.3/63/L.49). We are convinced that the adoption of the draft resolution would contribute to the consolidation of international efforts to overcome those ugly phenomena. We call on all States that condemn the crimes of Nazism and fascism and pay tribute to its victims to support that initiative.

History has severely condemned National Socialism. The crimes of Nazism and its collapse are a formidable warning to all those who incite ethnic tensions and forget the lessons of the Second World War. We cannot allow people to suffer again by permitting the spread and resurgence of chauvinist doctrines.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union, Croatia, Ukraine, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The European Union, like the United Nations, arose out of the ruins of the Second World War. At the height of the turmoil, the Holocaust covered our entire continent with its ashes. However, far beyond Europe, it marked consciences and changed our hearts. The human race will never be the same again.

More than 60 years have passed since the Holocaust. Where the actual tragedy took place, Europeans have together patiently built a Union that has consolidated peace throughout the continent and brought them security and prosperity. United in their diversity, Europeans have learned the errors of their ways. They did not build to forget — quite the contrary. The memory of the Holocaust was at the core of their entire reconciliation process. Europe is aware of its responsibility towards the survivors, their children and grandchildren. All Europeans must know and remember so that the barbarity that almost swept them away will never emerge again.

Three years ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/7, which designated 27 January as International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The European Union welcomes the adoption of that resolution, which commemorates the liberation of the Nazi camps and honours the memory of Holocaust victims, first and foremost the millions of Jewish victims — men, women and children — but also the Roma, homosexuals, political prisoners or prisoners of war, and the physically and mentally handicapped.

Commemorating Holocaust victims is an integral part of our common heritage. It demonstrates our commitment to doing our utmost to counter the very idea that the worst might happen again. Unfortunately, as we have seen in the past, that lesson is still being rejected, denied or scorned in various parts of the world. Even today, as the United Nations meets once again to reaffirm its condemnation of the Holocaust and to perpetuate the memory of its victims, some have cast doubts in that regard or even deny it ever occurred.

That is why the Assembly requested that the Secretary-General establish an outreach programme on the theme "The Holocaust and the United Nations" and take measures to encourage civil society to mobilize throughout the world. The European Union welcomes the programme and the Secretary-General's report (A/63/316), which underscores its successful implementation since its establishment in January 2006. The programme facilitated the creation of an international network of groups from civil society, world-renowned institutions and Holocaust experts to develop as efficient and comprehensive an outreach programme as possible.

By providing civil society with communication tools to keep the memory of victims alive, the programme is contributing to the fight against forgetting or denying the Holocaust. As there are increasingly fewer Holocaust survivors who can still bear witness to it, it is essential that we find new ways to keep the memories of those horrendous crimes alive for future generations.

As the President of the Republic of France said at Auschwitz at the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the camps in 2005,

> "To honour their memory, to honour the memory of all those deportees who died tragically in this place of suffering and Nazi extermination: that is the duty of all peoples who refuse to accept that the insult of oblivion should be added to this betrayal of human values ... When we remember each and every one of them, we give them justice. We prevail over their executioners, who promised them oblivion."

The purpose of adopting a resolution on Holocaust denial (61/255) last year was to confront the dangers of ignorance and scorn. The Holocaust has a specific universal character that cannot be denied or undermined. By commemorating the Holocaust, we reaffirm our commitment to fighting anti-Semitism, racism, hatred and all forms of religious, political or ethnic intolerance. For all those reasons, in 2005 the European Union supported declaring an International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust and establishing a specific United Nations outreach programme.

Members of the Assembly can rest assured that the people of Europe, united in the memory of the horror and in their desire to promote peace and solidarity among all peoples, will continue to act together to repel any temptation to forget and the dangers of disavowal. That is our honour and our duty as a free people.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): Austria fully aligns itself with the statement which has just been made by the Ambassador of France on behalf of the European Union.

We thank the Secretary-General for his excellent and comprehensive report (A/63/316) on the programme of outreach on the Holocaust and the United Nations. The report shows that Member States all over the world have benefited from the outreach programme since the adoption of resolution 60/7 in 2005. The resolution also urges Member States to develop educational programmes that will inculcate future generations with the lessons of the Holocaust in order to help prevent future acts of genocide and, in that context, specifically mentions the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. As the current Chair of the Task Force, Austria is very grateful for the work carried out by the Secretariat under the outreach programme. Let me share some aspects of the Task Force's work under the Austrian chairmanship.

The Task Force's work is based on the Stockholm Forum Declaration of 2000. The Declaration cites the quest for mutual understanding as one of the most important lessons to be learned from the Holocaust. The commitments it enshrines originate from the unprecedented character of the Holocaust, which will always hold a universal meaning. The Task Force's working groups function as a unique network of international cooperation comprising some of the world's leading experts in the field of education, remembrance and research. The intention is that teachers, students and society as a whole learn about the Holocaust and the lessons to be drawn from it for present and future generations. Task Force efforts to mobilize support and expertise for Holocaust memorials contribute to the culture of Holocaust remembrance. Special working groups focus on the genocide against the Roma, as well as on the Holocaust and other genocides.

The Task Force by its very nature is particularly concerned with tendencies of diminishing or denying the Holocaust. The Task Force is comprised of 25 member States, but it carries its mission beyond its own geographical range. Gaining knowledge about and dealing with the Holocaust should be further mainstreamed. That calls for a broader communication strategy with the aim of having Holocaust remembrance generally accepted as part of human rights education and learning. One of the Task Force's main goals under the Austrian chairmanship is to improve medial outreach. Its website serves as an open and accessible resource for mainstreaming Holocaust education, remembrance and research. The Task Force makes its tools accessible to the general public and seeks to deepen its cooperation with other organizations pursuing similar objectives.

On 10 November 2008, the day of remembrance of the 1938 pogroms, Task Force member States will come together with representatives of the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to discuss common objectives and experiences. My delegation is very pleased that the Special Adviser of the Secretary General for the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Francis Deng, will also be present at that special event.

Mr. McNee (Canada): In 2005, when the United Nations Holocaust remembrance programme was created, an invitation was extended to all Member States to remember the Holocaust and to build societies based on inclusion, human dignity and respect for all persons. It is not good enough for us to stand here today and say that we remember and mourn what happened over six decades ago, for no one can truly comprehend the suffering of those who perished in the Holocaust. But we do understand that the attempted extermination of the Jewish people was a crime against

all of humanity, and we understand that the prevention of genocide is a fundamental responsibility of the international community today.

Societies built on an ethos of tolerance and acceptance, where all forms of racism and discrimination are equally unacceptable, are needed now more than ever. Today, discrimination and intolerance have not yet been eradicated. Doing so is central to the task of preventing genocide and crimes against humanity in the future.

Canada is both supportive of and pleased with the energy and dedication the United Nations Department of Public Information has put into implementing resolution 60/7 of 2005. The Secretary-General's report (A/63/316) provides an impressive list of activities that have been undertaken since then, including initiatives commemorating the end of the Holocaust, network-building, academic seminars, civil society engagement and developing information products for educators. Canada would like that work to continue in years to come.

We have been struck by the fact that so many civil society organizations and artists responded to the United Nations call to work together in ensuring that the Holocaust is never forgotten. We note in that context that a Toronto-based multinational group of children came to the United Nations lobby last year to perform extracts from Oratorio Terezin, a moving piece based on poetry written by children in the Terezin ghetto.

In Canada, we have acted to educate our citizens on the Holocaust. An annual Canadian Holocaust Remembrance Day has been established, at which the Prime Minister, political party leaders and parliamentarians appear with Holocaust survivors on Parliament Hill to ensure that the memory of the Holocaust is never lost. Canadian archival collections — including the Jacob M. Lowy Collection, which contains some of the earliest attempts to document and publicize the Holocaust — have been made available for education and research. The Canadian Government has provided funding to the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre and the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, and is currently providing multi-year funding for the creation of a new human rights museum in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Also, Canada has been active in exploring the question of Holocaust-era cultural property.

Canada is very pleased to see that the Department of Public Information has used the entire United Nations network to ensure that the message reach audiences around the world. We applaud the fact that the outreach programme makes every effort to warn against the consequences of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination.

It is very impressive to see so many events and countries in the Secretary-General's report. That having been said, as United Nations information centres are only present in some countries, we all need to do even more to ensure that this messaging reaches the entire world. It is up to national Governments to fill the gap where there is no United Nations presence.

Canada also notes the importance of resolution 61/255 of 2007, which urges all Member States unreservedly to reject any denial of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part, or any activities to that end.

In June 2007, Canada took the first step towards becoming a full member in the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. Membership in the Task Force will strengthen our ability to contribute to the construction of societies, both in Canada and around the world, that are based on human dignity and where acts like the Holocaust are no longer possible.

(*spoke in French*)

In conclusion, Canadians, like all members of the international community, have a duty to remain vigilant with respect to all forms of racism and discrimination, including anti-Semitism. We must ensure that the memory of the Holocaust is never lost. Canada, for its part, is firmly committed to that end.

Mr. Hill (Australia): It is now over 60 years since the world saw the defeat of a barbaric and tyrannical Nazi regime that had been set on the systematic eradication of the Jewish people. Australia considers the genocide perpetrated against the Jewish people during the Holocaust to be the most abhorrent of crimes. It cost many millions of lives and caused immeasurable damage and dislocation to the lives of many millions more. Its effects have been profound for a number of generations and continue to be felt today.

The Holocaust showed the depths to which humankind can descend and made clear to the world the devastating consequences of anti-Semitism, racial

hatred and persecution. However, it is a sad fact that anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial, racism and religious intolerance continue to exist to this day.

Australia commends the work of the United Nations Programme of outreach on the Holocaust and the United Nations, as detailed in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/316). Since its establishment in 2006, the programme has worked actively to meet the aims of resolution 60/7 on Holocaust remembrance, including through memorial and educational activities, exhibitions and media outreach. Raising awareness of the Holocaust not only helps us to remember the many victims but also serves as a reminder of the need to remain vigilant and to take steps to prevent such a horror from happening again.

Mr. Ndabarasa (Rwanda): My delegation commends the Secretary-General for his report, entitled "Programme of outreach on the Holocaust and the United Nations (A/63/316)".

Remembrance of the Holocaust serves first and foremost to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, to educate a generation of young people about the Holocaust and genocide, to raise awareness across the broader public and to stimulate more people to use their voice and challenge society's values. Rwanda, as a nation that has experienced the horrors of genocide, fully appreciates the significance of remembrance and the role it plays in reconciliation and the prevention of future genocides.

My delegation commends the work that the Department of Public Information has undertaken with various stakeholders and through a variety of mediums to ensure that the lessons from the Holocaust and the genocide in Rwanda are disseminated to as wide an audience as possible. Rwanda has received generous support in exposing what led to the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

My delegation appreciates the work of other organizations that are educating and exposing intolerance in varied forms that may graduate into genocide or acts of genocide. Those noble efforts deserve commendation and the good work must be continued, because hate and intolerance are still forces in our world.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I now call on the representative of Iran to exercise the right of reply.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today the General Assembly heard baseless and absurd distortions by certain States against the Islamic Republic of Iran. We reject those distortions and express our concern over and condemnation of the misuse of this body by certain circles to pursue some unwarranted political goals.

We, along with others, have condemned and continue to condemn genocide against any race or ethnic or religious group as a crime against humanity. My delegation wishes to reiterate that unambiguous position here again today. In our view, there is no justification for genocide of any kind, nor can there be any explanation for certain unfortunate attempts made by some, and particularly by the Israeli regime, to exploit past crimes as a pretext to commit new genocides and crimes.

We believe that to be a valid and serious concern that the international community should not fail to address. Unfortunately, certain political and media circles have mischievously interpreted that genuine concern and resorted to a campaign of misinformation and defamation against those who have called for a thorough examination of the incidents.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 59.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.

United Nations A/63/PV.38

General Assembly
Sixty-third session

Official Records

38th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 4 November 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 58

Report of the Human Rights Council (A/63/53 and Add.1)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In connection with this item, I would like to recall that the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided at its 34th plenary meeting, on 30 October 2008, to consider agenda item 58 in plenary meeting and in the Third Committee.

Taking into account that decision, the Assembly will consider in plenary meeting the annual report of the Human Rights Council on its activities for the year.

Upon the conclusion of the debate in plenary on this item, the General Assembly will revert to this agenda item in the context of its consideration of the report of the Third Committee.

The Assembly will now start its consideration of the annual report of the Human Rights Council on its activities for the year.

The report of the Human Rights Council that is being presented to this sixty-third session of the General Assembly is a relevant document, particularly now, when we are celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is the original source of the rights, freedoms and ethical and legal standards that compel us to recognize and respect the dignity, freedom and equality of all human beings, without discrimination of any nature, whether political, social, religious, ethnic or of any other type.

The Universal Declaration is today more relevant than ever. The active and motivating power of human rights compel us to fight together to eradicate the scourges afflicting today's society, such as the food, energy and financial crises, climate change, the degradation of Mother Earth, human trafficking, state terrorism and violence against women and children, among other global evils.

This report of the Council is entirely consonant with the Universal Declaration, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and other international human rights instruments that affirm that human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and progressive, and that they must be addressed in a fair and equitable manner on an equal basis, giving each one of them the same weight.

This report appears today before the highest authority in the United Nations and provides us with much empirical data but also, above all, with the transformative and dialectical force of human rights in solving the main problems that oppress our world today. The contents of the report are relevant and timely, as they rightly denounce the violations of human rights taking place in various parts of the world against various groups that are excluded and rendered invisible and whose humanity is denied. The document

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also proactively shows us the path to follow to prevent, put an end to and compensate for those human rights violations.

Significant topics such as the eradication of hunger and extreme poverty, access to water, the protection of native peoples, the elimination of all forms of modern slavery, including human trafficking and economic exploitation, the eradication of all types of discrimination, respect for human rights in efforts to combat terrorism and violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, are among the topics that this Assembly will have to deal with in the coming years.

We must remain committed to institutionalizing the Human Rights Council as a forum that nourishes and enhances all the activities of the United Nations.

I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria and President of the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Uhomoibhi (Nigeria): This past Friday, 31 October 2008, I had the distinct honour and privilege to present the report of the Human Rights Council to the Third Committee of the General Assembly. I come before the Assembly in plenary this morning to also apprise members on the activities of the Council, in accordance with resolution 60/251.

But permit me at the outset to say how very delighted I am, Sir, to see you in the presidency of the Assembly. I am pleased to reaffirm the support of the Human Rights Council to your leadership of the Assembly and to express our best wishes for your successful tenure.

Through you, Mr. President, I wish to thank the General Committee for the decision taken on the allocation of the agenda item to the Third Committee, as contained in document A/C.3/63/1/Add.1 of 30 October 2008, which resolved the modalities for the presentation of the annual report of the Council. It was indeed a reflection of the flexibility and cooperation of the membership that that step was achieved. I hope that the outcome will be built upon in the future.

My predecessors, His Excellency Mr. Luis Alfonso de Alba of Mexico and His Excellency Mr. Doru Romulus Costea of Romania, had presented the Human Rights Council's reports to the sixty-first and sixty-second sessions of the General Assembly respectively, covering the activities of the Council from June 2006 to June 2007. My current report covers the period of the second cycle of the Council, including the ninth session which took place from 8 to 24 September 2008.

It will be recalled that the decision of the General Assembly three years ago to establish the Council marked a significant development in United Nations efforts to place the promotion and protection of human rights on the front burner of global discourse. It reflected the commitment and resolve of Member States to revitalize the Organization's role in guaranteeing the enjoyment of human rights for all peoples. In a very particular sense, the decision to empower the Council to consider human rights situations in all countries through the mechanism of the Universal Periodic Review not only emphasized the principle of equality among all States, but also underscored the universality of all human rights.

Against that backdrop, during its second cycle, the Council continued the elaboration and conclusion of its institution-building process and addressed thematic and specific human rights situations around the world. The Council began to operationalize its new mechanisms and subsidiary bodies, such as the Universal Periodic Review, the Advisory Committee, the Social Forum, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Forum on Minority Issues and the special procedures. The Council enhanced its engagement with various stakeholders, including from national institutions and representatives of civil society organizations.

Although the Human Rights Council is now in its third year of existence, it is still very much at an evolutionary stage. Consequently, the Council sometimes draws upon aspects of the strengths and achievements of its predecessor body, the Commission on Human Rights, while striving to avoid its shortcomings both at the levels of substance and methods of work.

Allow me now briefly to highlight some aspects of the activities of the Human Rights Council.

With regard to the review, rationalization and improvement of the mandates of special procedure, which is a key aspect of the institution-building text, during its sixth session in September and December 2007, the Council commenced the review, rationalization and improvement of special procedures mandates at both the thematic and country levels. In the review, rationalization and improvement process, some mandates were renewed, some were terminated and

new ones were created. In carrying out that process, the President of the Council availed himself of the mechanism of the Consultative Group to ensure greater participation by Council members in the decision-making process.

At its seventh session, in March 2007, the Council held a high-level segment during which dignitaries representing States members of the Council in attendance welcomed the accomplishments of the Council since its inception. Many identified the challenges that could be faced by the Council but expressed their belief that the institution marked a departure that should bode well for the future of human rights. Significantly, during the session, the Council adopted resolutions and decisions covering civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including on the prevention of genocide, in commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

At its eighth session, the Council adopted the optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. That was truly significant, as it represented an effort to make civil and political rights equal with economic, social and cultural rights, all of which are interrelated, interdependent, indivisible and universal. That important international human rights instrument is before the General Assembly for adoption at the current session.

On the Universal Periodic Review, during the second cycle the Council began to implement the mechanism comprehensively. So far, 32 countries have been reviewed in a transparent and equal manner. The outcomes of the two sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, held in April and May 2008, were adopted during the eighth session in June 2008. At the recent session in September, some Member States that had already been reviewed voluntarily shared their experiences on the implementation of and follow-up to the recommendations contained in the outcomes of the review.

Also, at the ninth session, in September 2008, the Council received updates on the two regional preparatory meetings for the Durban Review Conference on Racism, Xenophobia and related Intolerance, scheduled to take place in Geneva in April 2009. The meetings were held in Brasilia and Abuja and produced framework documents as additional inputs for the review process.

In conformity with its mandate, the Council addressed serious human rights situations in various parts of the world. Accordingly, three special sessions were held during the reporting period — regarding the human rights situation in Myanmar, the human rights violations emanating from Israeli military attacks and incursions in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip, and the negative impact of the worsening of the food crisis on the realization of the right to food for all. By holding, for the first time, a special session on the thematic issue on the right to food, the Council was able substantively to link its work with what is happening in the real world, which has adverse effects on the lives of millions of people.

Given that we live in a globalizing world where an event in one part has the potential to affect life in other parts, the Council found it necessary to remain vigilant and to be seized of all situations, namely, of growing inequality, continuing armed conflicts and other menaces, such as climate change and the food crisis. In dealing with those important issues, it is clear that Member States must continue to muster the necessary political will and commitment to overcome the challenges that the world currently faces, mainly in the human rights arena, if the Council is to fulfil expectations.

In that connection, it was therefore important that, at its ninth session, the Council adopted a decision on the holding of a commemorative session on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That historic event is scheduled to take place in Geneva on 12 December 2008. Beyond providing a fitting opportunity for commemorating the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, that event is also expected to afford member States an opportunity to reaffirm their faith in the core human rights values and principles.

In conclusion, in adopting resolution 60/251, establishing the Human Rights Council, three years ago, the General Assembly sought to build an institution that would make a real difference in the governance of human rights at the universal level. It is gratifying today that the Human Rights Council, as distinct from its preceding body, the Commission on Human Rights, has already carved out a niche for itself with regard to its methods of work. What needs to be done is to ensure that the decisions and resolutions adopted by the Council on the variety of issues placed

on its agenda are fully supported by the General Assembly in order to give concrete meaning and substance to the work of the Council. In that regard, the Council needs to be provided with adequate resources to carry out its work, as requested in the decision adopted by the Council at its ninth session entitled "Strengthening of the Human Rights Council", which is contained in the report.

All too often, most times without real justification, the Human Rights Council has been criticized on its methods and the outcome of its work. Let me appeal here for greater circumspection, objectivity and patience in assessing the work of the Council. Two years is hardly enough time to be overly critical of an institution that we strongly believe holds great promise as a universal human rights body.

I would like to reiterate my personal commitment to follow the path of my predecessors and to work closely with the Council's members to achieve the noble objectives enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is our collective responsibility, working with objectivity, candour and commitment, to ensure that the Council lives up to its name and to the standards expected of it. That is our duty. That is our expectation. That indeed is our vocation as Member States of the United Nations General Assembly.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the potential candidates and countries of Stabilization and Association Process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, associate themselves with this statement. A full version of my statement has been distributed, and I should just like to emphasize a few points.

I should like, first, to thank Ambassador Martin Ihoeghian Uhomoibhi for submitting the third annual report of the Human Rights Council (A/63/53) and to thank Ambassador Doru Costea, former President of the Council, who served for most of the period covered in this report.

Pursuant to the decision on United Nations reform taken by heads of State at Government during the 2005 World Summit, the General Assembly decided in 2006 to create the Human Rights Council to replace the former Commission on Human Rights. Our objective was to improve the United Nations human rights protection machinery in order to make it a mainstay of our Organization. We all know that peace, security, development and human rights complement one another, and are mutually reinforcing. It is through their joint promotion that we will strengthen collective well-being.

The Human Rights Council has been entrusted with a ambitious mandate: to ensure the promotion of human rights for all, to make recommendations on serious violations of these rights in order to put an end to them, and to guarantee that human rights are taken into account in all United Nations policies. The principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity must guide the Council's work, which is based on cooperation and dialogue among States. We must stress those guiding principles in the Assembly as we review this report.

Since its establishment, the Human Rights Council has addressed many issues, on some occasions leading to major breakthroughs in human rights protection. That is how the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the draft International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and, more recently, the draft optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights were drawn up.

Three special sessions were held over the past year. One dealt with the right to food and another with the situation in Burma, which is still cause for great concern. If the issue of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, which was previously addressed at a special session, must be debated in the Human Rights Council, its members must make sure that they reach balanced solutions.

The Human Rights Council's mechanisms must be consolidated through our shared commitment. In this regard, the special procedures are one of the Council's key tools. The serious human rights violations in some countries justifies maintaining these procedures. It must be reaffirmed that the primary objective of these special procedures is to promote expertise and to make recommendations. We call upon the Council to remain vigilant for particularly serious situations that deserve our full attention.

The Universal Periodic Review is an innovative mechanism that should also help improve the human

rights situation on the ground through dialogue and cooperation. Since its inception, 32 States were reviewed, seven of which are from the European Union. We commend the seriousness with which these 32 countries have granted this review.

Although some positive developments have been noted, many situations still deserve our full attention at the upcoming sessions. The European Union hopes that the 48 States that will submit themselves to the Universal Periodic Review will do so in good faith and with all the necessary rigour. The experience of the two previous sessions should allow us to improve the review. We must also ensure that the Council's recommendations and the pledges made by States under review are effectively implemented.

Due to the regularity of its meetings, the Human Rights Council has become a virtually permanent entity with an ambitious and challenging mandate. Its past action provides us a glimpse of its great future possibilities. However, in order to go from words to concrete action, we must ensure that the Human Rights Council and its institutions can run smoothly. We should all pledge to work towards that end.

The European Union calls for members of the United Nations to maintain close cooperation in the spirit of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. It is the heritage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose sixtieth anniversary we will celebrate soon and which must remain our common landmark. Similarly, the encouraging outcomes that we have already had within the Council will lead to real progress in the effective enjoyment of human rights for all around the globe.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We thank Ambassador Uhomoibhi for his excellent presentation of the report of the Human Rights Council (A/63/53 and Add.1). Our thanks go also to Ambassador Doru Costea, who presided over the Council over much of the period covered in the report. We welcome this opportunity to discuss the report in this Assembly to which the Council is a subsidiary body — as we welcome the interactive exchange in which the President of the Council engaged with the Third Committee last Friday.

It is a pragmatic arrangement that is fully in accordance with the letter and spirit of resolution 60/251, through which the Assembly created the Council. We hope that this debate will contribute to the awareness of the work of the Human Rights Council here in New York and that our colleagues in Geneva can benefit from it in tackling the challenges ahead. We would also wish that the schedule of the General Assembly plenary can in the future be arranged in such a manner that this debate does not coincide with Third Committee meetings. We believe that a more energetic relationship between the General Assembly and the Council is desirable and that it should not necessarily be limited to the consideration of the report during the fall season.

The third report of the Council to the Assembly illustrates the steady progress that has been made in the area of institution-building. After the adoption of the relevant package of measures last year, the Council has now gone through the first round of Universal Periodic Review (UPR), an instrument that we hope will make an important contribution to the dialogue on human rights issues and the implementation of human rights standards worldwide. In this context, we look forward to our own presentation under the UPR on 5 December. While it is of course too early to offer a final view on the value of the UPR, there are a number of observations that we can already offer at this point. We certainly welcome the emphasis on the implementation of human rights standards in the framework of the UPR. That emphasis is both essential for addressing the implementation gap that still exists 60 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it is also in keeping with the mandate of the Council given to it by the Assembly.

The first experiences gathered also show additional potential. In particular, the relationship between the UPR and the treaty body processes needs to be addressed. UPR and the presentation before treaty bodies are of course very different in nature, both as far as their legal foundation is concerned and their application in practice. Nevertheless, they are the two essential mechanisms through which States present their human rights record, and we must therefore explore synergies between the two. The treaty body mechanisms can and should be strengthened through the UPR. In particular, the outcome of the UPR and the voluntary commitments of States should be fed into the treaty body processes and become part of the dialogue between States and the treaty bodies, insofar as they are relevant for the treaty under discussion, of course. That would make the two mechanisms mutually beneficial while preserving their distinct

characteristics. It would also be useful to get consolidated input from treaty bodies themselves on this question, such input resulting from the ongoing discussions in inter-Committee meetings.

The Council has almost concluded its complex and challenging review of the special procedures, as we have heard from the President of the Council. The results are generally satisfactory. While we support finalizing the tasks by reviewing one mandate that is still outstanding, we also believe that we must now shift our focus to the cooperation offered by States. State cooperation with the special procedures offers a lot of room for improvement and we expect those who serve as members of the Council to exercise leadership and set positive examples in that respect.

All States that are members of the Council have pledged to fully cooperate with it, and issuing a standing invitation to special procedures is one of the best ways of living up to that pledge in practice. We hope that the imminent conclusion of the review will lead a significant number of States — especially those that put their names forward for membership on the Council — to issue such invitations.

As a novel development during the reporting period, the Council has for the first time held a special session on a thematic issue. We strongly welcome that development and hope that the Council will continue to explore the potential of such ad hoc thematic meetings as the one held on the food crisis. We believe that such meetings could greatly contribute to the relevance of the work of the Council also outside of Geneva and put a renewed emphasis on its thematic work.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the President of the Human Rights Council for having introduced the report on its activities (A/63/53). The Human Rights Council strengthens the universal system for the protection and promotion of human rights within the United Nations. That unique nature of the Council is reflected by the fact that its annual report is considered in plenary by the General Assembly.

I would like to share four main messages with the Assembly today. First, with the conclusion in June 2007 of the institutional consolidation of the Human Rights Council, the work of that organ gained in substance and the Council is now fully able to discharge its functions. The implementation of the universal periodic review as of April 2008 made it possible to consider human rights situations in 32 countries in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation. In most cases, it was thus possible to collectively identify ways and means of improving the human rights situations in our countries.

It is important to emphasize that the three reports that serve as the basis for the review are an excellent source of information about the country concerned. The commitment of State authorities at the highest level, as well as the participation of civil society, are indispensable components if we wish to realize the full potential of that new mechanism.

The determining factor for its success remains, however, the political will of the States under review to implement the recommendations arising from the review. Only after a complete review cycle will we be in a position to genuinely evaluate progress in the field, thanks to that new instrument. We also deem it important to take into consideration the contributions of that new mechanism to our work here in New York.

Secondly, over the past 18 months the Council has considered substantive matters and, thanks to its special sessions, responded rapidly to human rights situations throughout the world. In addition, for the first time the Council held a held a special session on a thematic issue: the right to food in the context of the current world food crisis. In its working methods, there is still a problem with the Council's ability to forecast its activities. That could perhaps be remedied by creating a programme of work for the coming year so as to distribute its workload over three annual sessions by grouping agenda items, so that each session does not have to consider every single item, as is done today.

Similarly, we must find a way to keep our Governments, the international and national media and other interested parties focused not only on the main session of the Council held in March, but also on the other sessions held throughout the year.

Thirdly, the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in its capacity as the secretariat of the Council, is indispensable to the smooth operation of its work, and we warmly thank the High Commissioner.

We are aware of the fact that, with an organ that is nearly permanently in session, the intensity of the work and the relationship between the High

Commissioner for Human Rights and member States has increased considerably. Nevertheless, we wish to recall that the mandate of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was established in 1993 by the General Assembly and that its structure is part of the Secretariat. We strongly oppose any attempt to establish Council control over the activities, priorities and fieldwork of the High Commissioner. The Office of the High Commissioner must continue to enjoy the necessary autonomy to ensure the defence and promotion of all human rights throughout the world, as spelled out in its 1993 mandate.

Fourthly and finally, two and a half years after the creation of the Human Rights Council — and thus halfway to its status review by the General Assembly in 2011 — we note that we still have no clear notion of the attribution of competencies between the Council and the General Assembly's Third Committee. Switzerland is committed to the complementarity of the two organs through reinforcing cooperation and reducing overlapping.

The General Assembly, as a universal body, should serve essentially as a framework for general reference and play a programming role. The Human Rights Council has an operational part to play in the implementation of political commitments assumed by States in the light of their pertinent international legal obligations. The General Assembly could, for instance ask the Council to use its mechanisms to discuss a particular theme with respect to a human rights situation, and then to report on operational follow-up.

The Council could also propose to the General Assembly that it discuss a particular topic, and the Assembly could decide either to send it back to the Council to be discussed and followed up at the operational level, or to address the matter itself at the universal level, given its importance or its basic nature. Ultimately, by establishing a dynamic and positive interrelationship between the Council and the Third Committee, both will be strengthened in their respective roles and not through a rigid separation of competencies.

In conclusion, the Council has moved ahead by consolidating its institutional framework and strengthening human rights through dialogue. It is on the right path towards a credible and efficient international system of protection.

The Human Rights Council is still a young organ and it is normal that some adjustments may be necessary. That requires all of us, however, to give it our unswerving commitment in New York and in Geneva. Switzerland can be relied on to serve as one of the engines of the Council's progress.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to extend my appreciation to the President of the Human Rights Council for his comprehensive report to the General Assembly today. We commend the completion by the Council of the process of institution-building and reviewing and establishing the mechanism and its subsidiary bodies that enable it to enter the implementation phase of its programmes and mandates, as stipulated in resolution 60/251. Creation of new mandates focusing on economic, social and cultural rights, and holding of panel discussions on a number of important subjects, are worthy achievements of the Council in its new era.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council, based on the valuable experiences and lessons learned from the strengths and shortcomings of the Commission on Human Rights, provided us with new hope and the necessary motivation to consider human rights issues that must be addressed if we are to find sound, decent solutions to the challenges that confront us. The Human Rights Council must be the focal point of reliance, hope and participation for all peoples and Governments in addressing global human rights challenges. As a forum for dialogue, understanding and cooperation in which to achieve the universal realization of human rights, it must be devoid of politicization.

We maintain that the reform of the United Nations in the field of human rights will not bear fruit unless partiality, selectivity and double standards are dealt with promptly and vigorously. Furthermore, there is a need to approach human rights issues in a comprehensive, cooperative and constructive manner. Manipulation and abuse of the United Nations human rights mechanisms and machineries have, unfortunately, become a prevalent tradition and exercise by certain countries and should no longer be tolerated, primarily because of their destructive impact on the credibility, efficiency and legitimacy of these mechanisms and machineries.

In that respect, the mechanism of the Universal Periodic Review constitutes a breakthrough in United

Nations intergovernmental human rights activities. The merit of this mechanism is that it ensures universality, objectivity, non-selectivity and impartiality in the work of the United Nations human rights machinery. The actual performance of the mechanism in a logical context should allow the human rights machinery to act beyond political interests. We appreciate the degree of transparency and the constructive examination of situations under the Universal Periodic Review during the discussion of the challenges that lie ahead, given that, in any State, there is always room for improvement.

My delegation is of the opinion that, as the Third Committee's prerogative, it is necessary and timely to pay greater attention to its designated work and mandate and to those of the Human Rights Council. In principle, the Third Committee should focus primarily on policy-oriented deliberations and discussions in order to provide strategic policy recommendations to the General Assembly that will, in turn, guide the international community, in particular the Human Rights Council, in further enhancing the promotion and protection of all human rights. In that context, the consideration of country-specific situation proposals categorically falls within the purview of the Human Rights Council and its pertinent mechanism.

The Human Rights Council is the competent specialized United Nations organ responsible for considering human rights situations in all countries. In a logical context, the unhindered and smooth functioning of the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, in particular the Universal Periodic Review, would enable the human rights machinery to function with impartiality, prudence and consistency. The overwhelming majority of the Member States believe that the ongoing selective presentation of country-specific human rights resolutions in the General Assembly runs counter to the mandate of Human Rights Council and undermines its competence and authority.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that, at this crucial juncture, in which we are facing real human rights challenges in many parts of the world, the Human Rights Council should rely on the principles of objectivity, cooperation, transparency and consensus, and should, in discharge of its historic mandate, undertake to rectify the past shortcomings of the United Nations human rights machinery. Accordingly, we are determined to continue our constructive cooperation with the Council in favour of the promotion and protection of human right all over the world.

Mr. Costea (Romania) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to convey my gratitude to Ambassador Martin Uhomoibhi for his work as President of the Human Rights Council. It falls to him to lead the Council during a period in which we will have to show that the institutionalization of the Council and its functioning in what we could call a normal mode will not mean a return to the routine of the past. That is one of the challenges I will address later in my statement. We wish him every possible success in his work and assure him of our full cooperation. Believe me, he will need it. I have been in his shoes and I know exactly what I am referring to.

Romania associates itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of France on behalf of the European Union. However, I should like to make a few additional comments on the results of the Council's work, the atmosphere surrounding that work during the most recent cycle and the challenges that the Council, and especially the Member States, will have to face in the coming months.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Two and a half years ago, the establishment of the Council was decided in this very Hall. It is good to see the annual report of the Council addressed again in the plenary of the General Assembly, proving that we are indeed on the right track in giving human rights issues the priority they deserve alongside the peace, security and cooperation issues that form the three pillars of the work of the United Nations. We echo statements made at the thirty-second meeting of the Third Committee last Friday and encourage Member States to continue consideration of future annual reports of the Human Rights Council in the plenary of the General Assembly.

(*spoke in English*)

The results of the work that was done during the second cycle of the Council are known and there is little need to recapitulate them. Some aspects are worth highlighting, however.

First, the institution-building process was completed and decisions were taken concerning important and highly-sensitive issues, such as the actual functioning of the Universal Periodic Review; the review, rationalization and improvement of the

special procedures mandates; and the nomination of the mandate holders. Those three mechanisms are innovations in the landscape of the United Nations human rights machinery, and we all know only too well what it takes when change is needed and eagerly expected in multilateral organizations.

The Council expanded the use of tools that had been in place for some time now. For the first time, a special session was convened on a thematic issue. Likewise, panel discussions became part of the operative paragraphs of various resolutions. Some procedural issues were clarified, and others — such as interactive dialogue with special procedures mandate-holders and the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Council — have now acquired the status of standard practices.

Secondly, the overall attitude of Council members and observers alike was focused largely on a pragmatic and solution-oriented approach to action, in particular when the completion of the institution-building process was at stake. Cross-regional dialogue and a certain readiness to try out-of-the-box options were keys in that respect. Much work is still needed with a view to increasing resistance to the temptation to politicize debate and expanding the cooperative approach to substantive issues.

Some encouraging developments may be found in relation to the Universal Periodic Review. The 32 countries that took part in the exercise also took it seriously. More than once, it was said that the Review's effects could be seen on the ground even before the Review itself had come to a conclusion. That was possible as a result of the preparations of various countries for the process. Likewise, most of the recommendations were accepted by the States under review. That is indeed an important step forward, since it implies a formal commitment to acting with a view to implementing those recommendations.

Thirdly, several challenges are facing the Council. One of them is ensuring the Council's credibility. Human rights are not mere abstractions, and Eleanor Roosevelt's often-quoted wise words remind us of that elementary fact. It follows that gross and systematic violations of human rights must not be ignored by the Council and that no attempt to bring them before the Council be seen as a sign of selectivity.

Another challenge is ensuring the effectiveness of Council action. That requires, among other things, focused debates and decisions, resolutions that include concrete and measurable steps, and follow-up to resolutions and commitments. Assessing the implementation of the Council's own decisions must become a regular practice; at the same time, new mechanisms need to be insulated from attempts to change them immediately after their adoption.

Last but not least, I should like to discuss what, at the beginning of this statement, I called the routine of the past. The Human Rights Council replaced the Commission on Human Rights, and what we need to do now, more than ever, is replace the Commission's mindset with a new approach. As it develops its routine, the Council, as well as its observers, must avoid slipping back into the old routine. The memory of the Commission's faults is still very present, and so too is the shadow of the caterpillar that refused the lipstick yet still wanted to become a butterfly.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Martin Uhomoibhi for presenting the report of the Human Rights Council (A/63/53) and to express my delegation's appreciation for the diligent and inclusive manner in which he conducted the work of the Council at its ninth session.

Having completed the initial phase of reorganization in a new configuration, the Council is in the process of consolidating its central role within the United Nations system in the promotion and protection of human rights. The Council's report contains information regarding the extensive debates held on the various and urgent issues on its agenda. It also reflects the significant contributions made by Member States, as well as by representatives of international organizations and civil society.

The Brazilian delegation has endeavoured to participate actively in the work of the Human Rights Council. We initiated the draft resolution on human rights voluntary goals, which was adopted by consensus. That initiative, sponsored by 24 countries in all regions of the world, seeks to strengthen existing instruments in that area. It provides predictability and a concrete framework for the achievement of human rights goals. It is our intention to launch the human rights voluntary goals during the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be held in Geneva on 12 December.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council reflects the agreed objective, set out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, of reinforcing multilateral instruments and means to promote and protect human rights, which, alongside development and peace and security, is one of the pillars of the United Nations. In fulfilling the commitment undertaken by our leaders in 2005, we should maintain the current momentum and continue to pursue an invigorated Council.

Experience has shown that we — developing and developed countries alike — have to cope with particular difficulties and sensibilities when it comes to human rights. We should recognize those difficulties and sensibilities and strive to address them in a constructive and cooperative spirit. We should avoid finger-pointing and levelling accusations simply to obtain political gain. Such practices do not promote human rights, but instead protect vested interests.

Rather than repeating accusations from loudspeakers, we should make more use of negotiations as a way to bring opposing views closer together. We firmly believe that cooperation, rather than confrontation, is the best means to achieve the desired goal, which should always be to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights. Dialogue and cooperation should guide us towards that goal. There should be no non-negotiable issues on the agenda of the Human Rights Council.

My delegation is convinced that the best way to improve the Council's methods and operations is to fully engage in it. In that respect, we should make good use of existing mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review. As a comprehensive and non-selective mechanism, the Review is a useful instrument for addressing human rights situations worldwide. Both rigorous and constructive, the Review mechanism has created an environment of equality. It gives us an opportunity to recognize our shortcomings, to share our successful stories and to present solutions. Cooperation, not accusations, should steer the Universal Periodic Review exercise.

We should go even further, we should identify difficulties and make recommendations. The Council should provide solutions and help partners to overcome existing challenges. Member States should create a positive agenda for the Council by seizing the opportunity given to us by the Review mechanism.

Brazil is ready to take concrete measures to assist interested Member States in implementing Universal Periodic Review-related recommendations. We are willing to share our experiences and good practices with interested developing countries through a South-South cooperation initiative. We believe that such an approach could be constructive and play a central role in strengthening the Human Rights Council. In addition, we believe it is necessary to implement the objectives set out in resolution 60/251 and in the institutional package adopted last year.

We should avoid overlapping functions among United Nations bodies so as to ensure that the multilateral human rights system as a whole works in a coherent and efficient manner. In that respect, we continue to regard the plenary of the General Assembly as the adequate locus for the consideration of the report of the Human Rights Council.

We face many challenges to human rights these days. The sentiment of growing intolerance is a serious concern for the Brazilian Government. In a time of increasingly harsh laws on migrants, we should not depart from the commitment to the fundamental values of human rights. That matter should be part of our dialogue with a view to finding mutual understanding and to overcoming those challenges.

We are also living in a particularly serious moment due to the economic and financial crisis. Developing countries suffer the most from the harsh effects of the financial crisis, especially regarding the realization of human rights. We should seek to ensure that developing and least developed countries in particular do not shoulder the burden of a crisis for which they have not been responsible.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to convey my most heartfelt gratitude to the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Martin Ihoeghian Uhomoibhi of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for the quality of the Council's report (A/63/53) and for the exemplary manner in which he has led that body, whose strengthening is of primary importance to my country.

My delegation is gratified by the consensual formula adopted for the consideration of the report of the Human Rights Council in the plenary session of the General Assembly, which also enabled the Third Committee to consider the recommendations formulated by the Human Rights Council. Although

that compromise is not entirely satisfactory, it is a middle way that could be copied in upcoming years while waiting for the 2010 review of the status of the Human Rights Council.

The consideration of the report of the Human Rights Council, which coincides fortuitously with the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, provides me with the opportunity to reaffirm Senegal's dedication to the principles of the universality, independence and indivisibility of all human rights, which should guide our initiatives and our decisions within the Council.

After just under three years of existence, the Human Rights Council provides us with objective reasons for hope and supports us in our historic choice to remedy the shortcomings of the former Commission on Human Rights by replacing it with a body more adapted to the current international context. The promising results achieved by that young body, which quite rightly inspires both a great deal of hope and high expectations, provide my delegation with objective reasons for satisfaction and support its belief that a bright future awaits the Human Rights Council.

Indeed, the progress achieved by the Council during its three years of existence is all the more significant given that this new body finalized its institutional architecture within the proposed time frame with the convening in August 2008 of the inaugural session of its Advisory Committee.

Better yet, the important resolutions and decisions adopted during the nine regular sessions and seven special sessions, including one devoted in May 2008 to the global food crisis, bear eloquent witness to the dynamism of the Human Rights Council and testify, if there is any need to do so, to the Council's ability to respond to situations that call for its attention and to consider the many thematic issues on its agenda.

The effective launch of the new Universal Periodic Review mechanism is further grounds for the satisfaction and hope of my delegation. That innovative mechanism has just shown that it is possible to consider human rights in an impartial way that is free of all politicization. The diversity of the first 32 States examined within the framework of that mechanism is a satisfying guarantee of the effectiveness of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism.

Members of the Assembly will agree with me that the mechanism will genuinely contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights only if it allows for the establishment of objective, transparent and constructive dialogue between the various stakeholders. It is our responsibility to pool our efforts to achieve that objective, since the smooth functioning of the mechanism will to a large extent determine the credibility of the Human Rights Council.

In fact, the impact of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism will be gauged only following the implementation of the recommendations formulated during those sessions. For that reason, my delegation calls for the allocation of sufficient resources for the fund created to meet the technical assistance needs formulated within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review. Senegal is already preparing to be reviewed in 2009 by the Universal Periodic Review mechanism and is eager to implement the recommendations that will result from it.

The encouraging progress made in the functioning of the Human Rights Council should not lead us to lose sight of the long and arduous road ahead in ensuring that this new body meets our hopes and expectations. The contradictions noted here and there, which reflect the dynamism of our dialogue, must in no way undermine our determination or inhibit our desire to consolidate and strengthen the Human Rights Council. We must continue to seek areas of convergence and to work together to make dialogue and cooperation the basic principles guiding the work of that body and to ensure that justice and dignity for all prevail.

In that respect, Senegal reiterates its support for the rationalization and improvement of the special procedures system, whose contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights is essential. In the same spirit, my delegation calls for prudence in considering the fate of certain mandates so as to ensure that the Council's decisions take into account realities on the ground and the interests of all stakeholders.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my delegation's support for the recommendation by the Human Rights Council on the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which will undoubtedly contribute to re-establishing the balance between civil

and political rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is grateful to the President of the Human Rights Council, the representative of Nigeria in Geneva, for his presentation of the report of the Council to the General Assembly (A/63/53), in keeping with the importance that human rights deserve within the agenda of our Organization.

Mexico is fully committed to the consolidation of the Human Rights Council as the paramount organ entrusted with the promotion and protection of human rights by the Organization. My country played a constructive role in the negotiations in the General Assembly that led to the creation of the Human Rights Council and played an active part in the institutional development of the new organ, with the primary goal of ensuring its effectiveness.

Three years after its creation, the Council has the necessary tools to tackle the essential goal that was entrusted to it. Not only has it set in motion the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, which is without a doubt the most novel and promising tool it has, but it has almost completed the process of review, rationalization and refinement of the special procedure mandates.

At the same time, the Council has upheld the active participation of civil society in its work and has encouraged candidate States to present voluntary pledges and commitments in the field of human rights.

Mexico welcomes the report of the Human Rights Council on its activities, which covers its work from September 2007 to June 2008. Through three ordinary sessions and the same number of special sessions held during the same period, the Council clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of its new instruments. An example of that can be seen in its review of critical situations in various parts of the world, the adoption of several substantive resolutions and the renewal of a number of mandates.

In its task of protecting human rights, the Council, through the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, has analysed the situations of 32 countries from all over the world on equal footing, thanks to a participatory and novel exercise.

Mexico has seen how useful that exercise is at the national level, as it provided for a substantial dialogue on human rights among the relevant actors. My country recently completed the preparation of its national report, which was presented yesterday to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and which will be reviewed by the Universal Periodic Review mechanism in February 2009. Our report was elaborated on the basis of a comprehensive and broad-ranging process that involved the legislative and judicial branches, 29 departments of the Mexican Government and consultations with civil society.

This year, the Council continued to carry out its important standard-setting activities. The adoption of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is a historical step in the progressive development of international human rights law. As we declared earlier in our statement to the Third Committee, the adoption of that instrument by the General Assembly will give a new dimension to economic, social and cultural rights and will thus finally place them on the same level as civil and political rights.

Mexico promotes the effective coordination of work between the General Assembly, in particular the Third Committee, and the Human Rights Council, in order to avoid overlapping and ensure specialization. We urge all countries to actively participate in that effort. We appeal to the international community, in the light of the upcoming review of the work of the Council in 2011, to redouble its efforts to further strengthen that organ and elevate its status within our Organization. The Human Rights Council is destined to play a significant and relevant role in the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world.

Mr. Edrees (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to express our appreciation for the statement by the President of the Human Rights Council before the General Assembly, which comes following his valuable statement in the Third Committee this past week at the opening of the general debate on the report of the Council. The Third Committee is the negotiating and expert technical arm of the General Assembly on all issues related to human rights and international human rights law, within a framework that includes all Member States of the Organization.

I wish to reiterate in that regard that we went along with the ad hoc compromise agreement reached in the General Committee to consider the report both in

a plenary meeting of the General Assembly and in the Third Committee. We did so on the understanding that the Third Committee will consider and act upon all the Human Rights Council's recommendations to the General Assembly, including those dealing with the development of international law in the field of human rights, without prejudice to the right of Member States to present draft resolutions and decisions in the General Assembly or the Third Committee on any issue contained in the report.

Indeed, the establishment of the Human Rights Council, as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, has ushered in the dawn of a new and long-awaited era of joint action, with no politicization, selectivity or double standards. The Council has contributed to establishing a setting that is favourable to overcoming the obstacles that shackled international efforts aimed at consolidating universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the past. That was made possible by unifying standards and adopting a constructive, cooperative approach in dealing with human rights questions. Such an approach rests on the provision of advice and necessary technical and financial support upon the request of national Governments, in the light of their responsibility to promote and protect the human rights of all their citizens. The 2005 World Summit Outcome laid down that foundation, which was more recently reinforced by the launch of the Universal Periodic Review.

Undoubtedly, the coincidence of the discussion of the Council's report this year with the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents an important occasion to reiterate the lofty principles and international standards that we all agreed to on the basis of our unified collective efforts. It is also a reminder of our commitment, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the relevant international instruments, to work towards consolidating universal respect for human rights for all, without distinction and without shifting attention to certain aspects of human rights to the detriment of others.

Egypt welcomes the progress achieved in the practical implementation of the institutional framework laid down in the Council this past year, in addition to the positive development in reviewing the mandates of the special procedures, the elaboration of mechanisms to deal with complaints and the establishment of the Forum on Minority Issues. In addition, Egypt, as a current member of the Council, is keen to support the Council's ongoing efforts to fulfil our common aspirations on the basis of the complementarity between the roles of national institutions and the international community, on the one hand, and of additional human rights mechanisms, on the other.

Our mutual desire to promote human rights throughout the world and to make them common denominators among all societies requires that we commit ourselves to applying the fledgling Universal Periodic Review to all States, on an equal footing and without exception, within a constructive interactive framework and with the participation of non-governmental organizations and all segments of civil society. We must also confront with firm resolve the tendency of a few to presume to be the world's custodians of human rights on the basis of the flawed assumption — which has no substantive grounds — that their values, cultures, legal and social justice systems and human rights standards are superior to those of others. That also means preserving the existing institutional balance among the main United Nations organs when addressing human rights issues.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Furthermore, we must thwart attempts to circumvent the mandate of the Human Rights Council through the submission of country-specific resolutions — which can only lead to confrontation and discord — and to create structures parallel to the Council by, for example, unnecessarily extending the authority of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights beyond its mandate or by giving individuals in the offices of United Nations developmental programmes responsibility for monitoring the human rights situations in developing countries, in contravention of the principle of equality in monitoring human rights situations in all countries, whether developing or developed.

Thus, we should work together with the United Nations system to strengthen early warning capacities, relying on authenticated and non-politicized information, and strengthen the cooperation of States with the fact-finding missions established by the Council to investigate gross human rights violations, particularly those committed against peoples under foreign occupation and in conflict situations. The international community's efforts to achieve universal

respect for human and peoples' rights will not succeed unless we completely reject selectivity, politicization and double standards when addressing human and peoples' rights, in particular the inalienable right to self-determination.

In that context, it is imperative that the Council remain committed to ensuring respect for human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories and to verifying full compliance by Israel with its international obligations, including its commitment to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and the Council's fact-finding missions to investigate gross human rights violations. That includes allowing the required field visits to take place — the most recent of which was the high-level fact-finding mission led by Bishop Desmond Tutu to investigate the tragic events that had taken place in Beit Hanoun — as well as following the recommendations subsequently adopted by the Council. In that regard, Egypt supports the Human Rights Council's recommendation that the General Assembly consider the mission's report with the participation of mission participants. The report on Beit Hanoun should be considered in a special meeting of the General Assembly.

Therefore, the financial resources necessary for all Council activities should be made available and the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should be supported so that it can provide the necessary technical assistance and consultation to Member States, assisting them in the area of capacity-building in order to achieve complementarity between the role of the Commission and that of the Council and between the role of the international community and that of national Governments.

Clearly, the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, at the recommendation of the Human Rights Council and following its adoption in the Third Committee, represents an important step in restoring an equal international balance and focus on all aspects of human rights, together with civil and political rights, and fulfilling the common aspirations of peoples throughout the world to exercise the right to development, a fundamental right that is profoundly related to all other rights. We hope that that important step will strengthen efforts to bridge the gap between North and South and thus create improved living conditions that will contribute to the promotion of human rights both for individuals and for communities. We hope that it will also strengthen efforts to combat all forms of discrimination throughout the world, whether on the basis of race, gender, language or religion, within the framework of the follow-up to our mutual commitments under the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, in particular with regard to discrimination against women, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, migrants and other groups facing varying degrees of marginalization in their societies. In our efforts to that end, we must avoid any conditionalities that seek to impose on others controversial ideas that do not take into account the differing social, cultural and value systems of various societies or to link such ideas and concepts to development assistance and programmes.

Finally, Egypt hopes that our collective efforts to strengthen the cooperative approach that the international community has taken in addressing all human rights issues, based on mutual respect and within a framework of commitment to equal rights and obligations, compliance with the principles of international law and complementarity between international human rights law and international humanitarian law, will enable the Human Rights Council to fully play the role to which it aspires and send the lofty message for which it was created, in a manner that will strengthen our joint quest to consolidate universal respect for the human rights of all, without any exception.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): New Zealand joins others in expressing its appreciation to Ambassador Uhomoibhi for his report on the second cycle of the Human Rights Council (A/63/53). We also thank Ambassador Costea for his work as former President of the Council. New Zealand wishes to see the Council live up to its mandate and reach its full potential to respond quickly and effectively to human rights situations, while promoting open, inclusive dialogue and cooperation with concerned countries.

The Council can help States to effectively address gaps between the standards embodied in the core human rights treaties and the everyday realities that individuals face. As a demonstration of its commitment to human rights, New Zealand is standing for election to the Human Rights Council next year, and we hope to be the first member of the body from the Pacific region.

The Council provides an opportunity to focus on innovation and the exchange of effective practices in the implementation of human rights. The report on the second cycle illustrates the Council's evolving capacity to implement its promotion and protection mandate. Building on the foundations laid in the institution-building package adopted only last year, the Council has seen an important consolidation of its institutions and mechanisms, in particular the renewal of mandates under its system of special procedures, including those on specific human rights situations, and the commencement of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Review and assessment are critical elements in the effective implementation of human rights. In that regard, New Zealand very much welcomes the establishment of the UPR. We hope that an overarching and regular review of every country through the UPR, in addition to the more comprehensive and specific reporting processes of the treaty bodies, will help reduce that gap between policy and practice. In New Zealand, we are currently examining our own human rights performance in preparation for participating in the UPR next year and have recently completed a round of domestic consultations on our own report.

It is only over time that we will all see the true results of the UPR. However, our initial view is that the UPR has great potential. We are encouraged by the evolution in the scope of the recommendations that have emerged from the first two sessions. We urge States to remain committed to the process through the implementation of those recommendations.

The exchange of effective practices and the identification of capacity-building and technical assistance needs are essential to the UPR process. For New Zealand, a Pacific nation, we expect the UPR to facilitate dialogue with our Pacific neighbours on human rights. Earlier this year, we were pleased to assist the Kingdom of Tonga to prepare its UPR report, and in support of the UPR, New Zealand will host a seminar in early 2009 for Pacific countries to exchange views on the UPR and to engage in capacity-building.

There are many positive developments in the Council's working methods and, as with any new body, the Council's working methods will continue to evolve as it establishes routine practices and learns to manage its workload. We welcome the increased transparency of sessions, including the use of webcasting, and are encouraged by the increasingly open negotiation of resolutions.

However, New Zealand is concerned at the increasing pressures on small delegations that can undermine their effective participation in the Council and its working groups. At this juncture, we look to the Council to consider a more predictable and manageable work programme, to address the proliferation of meetings and to identify ways to consolidate the wealth of information it processes through its regular and special sessions.

We urge the Council to move towards a clear and predictable annual programme of work. We encourage further work to be done to make more effective use of meeting time for working groups, the streamlining of texts and a renewed focus on the implementation, rather than on mere restatement, of agreed standards.

New Zealand believes the Council can contribute to development and security through the effective implementation of human rights. If we are elected to the Council next year, we shall contribute, to the best of our ability, to the realization of this objective in a constructive, fair and open manner.

The Council must not let debate on difficult human rights issues undermine progress on the broad agenda of human rights, where cooperation and consensus have been the norm and where we can and must improve the standard of implementation.

We look to the Council to provide leadership in effective practices to promote and protect human rights at the national level, including with respect to the management of competing priorities in implementing and reporting on human rights obligations. And we all together look to delegations to focus on the implementation of the standards we have agreed in the past 60 years, which are comprehensive, robust and universal.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): At the outset, my delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Ambassador Uhomoibhi, President of the Human Rights Council, for his statement to the General Assembly.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, we are pleased to note that one year after its adoption, the Council's institution-building package has now moved into the operational phase of its various mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

It is also gratifying to recall that the first group of 32 States, including Ghana, was reviewed under that review mechanism. It is our view that this process has been a worthwhile innovation that is designed to address the obstacles to the full promotion and protection of human rights and to assist in strengthening States' capacity to implement human rights commitments and contributions through dialogue and cooperation, with a view towards the prevention of human rights violations.

When Ghana was reviewed in May 2008, its delegation used the occasion to brief the Council on measures the Government had taken to make Ghana a more tolerant society, including through increased respect for the rule of law, the strides it had made towards democratic rule, and reforms introduced to nurture a human rights culture to improve, inter alia, the lives of children, women and the marginalized segments of society. It also addressed the Council on efforts to address social and traditional mindsets that lead to human rights abuses and poverty and steps taken to make cooperation between State institutions and civil society groups more productive.

Our delegation also outlined the challenges facing the Government, particularly in the promotion of economic and social rights, including the areas of education, health and employment, and accepted most of the recommendations of the UPR Working Group. The Government is committed to ensuring the implementation of these recommendations.

Ghana attaches great importance to the UPR mechanism and believes that it provides an effective means for achieving progress towards greater responsibility for human rights. Within this context, it is worth noting the important lessons that can be drawn from the first sessions of the review exercise, including the need for States making recommendations to take into consideration the constitutional developments and cultural specificities of the States under review.

It is also necessary for the Council to abide by the guiding principles set out in the institution-building text to ensure universality, transparency, objectivity and non-selectiveness in the consideration of human rights matters. Such an approach will prevent the selective and discriminatory practices that discredited the former Commission, ensure the credibility of the Council and strengthen the degree of commitment by States.

In order to maintain the cooperative spirit achieved in the initial reviews, we advise the Council to avoid subtle attempts to pressure States to report on the implementation of the recommendations of the UPR prior to the completion of the four-year period stipulated in the institution-building package. In this regard, the Council's work programme should promote only the voluntary reporting by States of the commitments they have undertaken during the review prior to the scheduled four-year cycle.

It is our view that, even though the institution-building process was completed in the Council's second cycle, which ended in June 2008, and despite the fact that the implementation phase has commenced with the third cycle which began in September 2008, the Council's work can benefit from the fine-tuning of its work programme to facilitate the smooth functioning of its working methods.

It is our expectation that the UPR will develop into a meaningful mechanism complementing other activities of the Council related to country situations and to bring real added value to its work.

The Human Rights Council has made appreciable progress. However, it remains crucial for the Council to continue to fulfil effectively its mandate and address and prevent situations of human rights violations worldwide. Ghana pledges to work with all stakeholders to create a strong, effective and efficient body capable of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

Mr. Carmon (Israel): It is with dismay and disappointment that I address this gathering of the General Assembly. Today, we consider the second report of the Human Rights Council (A/63/53 and Add.1), a report that reflects how far the Council has drifted from its founding principles of impartiality, universality, non-selectivity and objectivity.

Sometimes tragedy is not just the pain we suffer, but the opportunities we miss. And today's report is a clear demonstration of the opportunities missed by the Human Rights Council and, may I say, by the international community as a whole. We all witness a United Nations human rights body targeting Israel in an obsessive and discriminatory fashion. We can only watch in disbelief as the Council ignores human rights abuses around the world while offering silence at best and praise at worst to some of the world's most ruthless, abusive dictators.

Since we considered last year's report, the Human Rights Council has adopted a series of seven resolutions condemning Israel. No other country among the other 191 members of the United Nations is the target of such negative and unreasoned attention. Each pronouncement against Israel lacks any semblance of objectivity — objectivity that the Council is supposedly based upon. Furthermore, this past year witnessed another one-sided special session against Israel, bringing the total number of special sessions targeting Israel to four. That is more than the number of all other special sessions combined. Certain members of the Council appear intoxicated with the automatic majority they enjoy as they abuse the Council's procedures and mechanisms.

As we consider today's report (A/63/53 and Add.1), I call upon each and every member of the General Assembly to pause for a moment and, in a spirit of honesty, ask himself or herself why Israel receives such disparate treatment. Is the Council's behaviour towards Israel truly about combating human rights abuses in the world? Or is this treatment a reflection of the political dynamics of the Council and of the larger United Nations community? The answer to those questions is very clear.

As a democracy, Israel does not seek to hide its human rights performance, nor should any other State. In fact, Israel is proud of its efforts to uphold the founding principles of the United Nations and to engage in constructive debates and dialogues. Yet Israel will not sit idly by and acquiesce as the Human Rights Council eschews the principles of balance and fairness. Israel will not remain silent as the Council prejudges the outcome of its findings and determines in advance Israel's culpability in a cynical and methodical manner.

While the one-sided resolutions and special sessions that target Israel are grave cause for concern for the credibility of the Council, the institutional framework established against Israel by the Council threatens its very integrity and legitimacy. Israel is the subject of the Council's only country-specific agenda item. The continued obsession with Israel serves to divert the attention of the Human Rights Council from legitimate human rights abuses around the world, and such politicization of the human rights agenda demonstrates the Council's commitment to political point-scoring, rather than to the real protection of human rights.

Furthermore, the Council clings to the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories. That mandate presumes Israeli violations and precludes the Special Rapporteur from discussing honestly human rights in a holistic and impartial manner. Palestinian terrorism that deliberately targets Israeli civilians thus receives immunity. How can the Special Rapporteur claim, for example, to act in the name of human rights when his mandate systematically prohibits the discussion of indiscriminate Qassam rocket attacks on the civilians of Sderot and Ashkelon? How can the Special Rapporteur claim to uphold universal values of human rights when he remains deafeningly silent as Hamas violates the most basic human rights of its own people?

Compounding that unbalanced mandate is the fact that, despite the requirement of the constitutive document that established the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur's mandate has not been reviewed or scrutinized for over 15 years since its creation in 1993. The absence of any review is not for lack of opportunity, as the mandate was scheduled to be reviewed in March and September of this year. Yet on both occasions, the Council evaded its duty. Even the Special Rapporteur himself publicly called for the mandate to be reviewed and updated.

There are millions of people across the world who live under the yoke of oppression and who cry out for the protection of the Human Rights Council. The Council itself was created to hear those pleas, to offer a brighter alternative to the world's most disenfranchised, but for political reasons the Council's obsession with Israel stands in the way of its true potential.

The report we consider today reflects a Human Rights Council that continues to fail to uphold the basic standards of human rights in an impartial, universal, non-selective and objective manner. In a year when the world is celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the work of the Human Rights Council casts a dark shadow on the commitment of the international community to the true principles of human rights.

Mr. Malginov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish to convey our gratitude to Ambassador Martin Uhomoibhi, President of the Human Rights Council, for having presented his report (A/63/53 and Add.1).

The creation of the Human Rights Council was an important stage in the ongoing reform of the United Nations. We are convinced that the transformation of the main intergovernmental human rights body of the United Nations system from a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council into a subsidiary body of the General Assembly was a significant step towards recognizing the importance of human rights issues and their rightful place among the Organization's priorities. We believe that, in the course of the upcoming review of the Council's activities, there will be a need to systematically assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Human Rights Council's Special Procedures and mechanisms in order to adopt the necessary decisions on changing or clarifying the status, mandate, composition, agenda and programme of work of that body.

It is very important that the process of analysing the early results of the Council's work should begin now, in the year of the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, when all of us are thinking about how to make the United Nations human rights mechanism more effective and responsive to the needs of all the peoples of the world and all individuals.

In our view, one of the most important functions that the Council is called upon to undertake in compliance with the provisions of resolution 60/251, is the Universal Periodic Review of the human rights situation in States Members of the United Nations. Russia backed the creation of that procedure in the hope that such a review on an equal and mutually respectful basis would help to lessen confrontation in intergovernmental cooperation on human rights.

We are convinced that, in the future, the Universal Periodic Review will have to fully replace the seriously discredited practice of introducing one-sided and politicized country-specific resolutions on human rights situations in individual States. At the same time, we reaffirm the need to strictly comply with existing intergovernmental agreements on modalities for conducting the Review, including on the issue of including various categories of participants in the process.

One of the most important instruments through which the Human Rights Council discharges its mandate is the system of Specialized Procedures inherited by the Council from the Commission on Human Rights. Unfortunately, along with their clear benefits, the Specialized Procedures also possess a number of shortcomings that have been legitimately criticized.

In that respect, it is with satisfaction that we note that, during the two years since the creation of the Human Rights Council, that system underwent a process of critical re-thinking and was institutionalized. An important outcome of that process was the bringing of the main human rights monitoring activities into line with the parameters of the Council's mandate. The functioning of human rights mechanisms is now evolving towards depoliticization. A guarantee of that was the adoption of the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures upon the initiative of member States in the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. We cherish the hope that the further development of that system will continue in the same direction.

The institutionalization of the Human Rights Council was accompanied by the establishment of new forms of relations between Governments and civil society, without which the Council would not be in a position to fulfil its potential. The Russian Federation hopes that the basis for the Council's interaction with human rights non-governmental organizations will be the principles of mutual responsibility and constructive dialogue.

The Russian Federation supports initiatives aimed at a more active participation of the Human Rights Council in reviewing the main areas of activity of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, including issues related to planning, implementing and rationalizing leading programmes at the global, regional and country levels. We are convinced that cooperation between the Council and the Office must be transparent and provide clear reciprocity.

With regard to better Office and Council management, we also believe that the same principles should be enforced as those that were enforced between the Office and the former Commission on Human Rights, including accountability. We base that opinion on the fact that the provisions of resolution 48/141, especially the section concerning the Commission's mandate, are by analogy applied to the mandate of the Council. More generally, the final objective of those efforts and cooperation must be to avoid duplication of efforts between all the

components of the United Nations system in the field of human rights, which in turn should not compete with each other but complement each other.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action reaffirmed the principle of the equality of all human rights and their interrelation, interdependence and mutual complementarity. In that respect, we would like to again urge the Human Rights Council to devote equal attention in its activities to all categories of human rights, norms and standards. We are convinced that that principle must be fundamental in determining the priorities and programmes of work of the Council in the near and long-term future.

We believe that the Council should devote additional attention to a number of other conceptual issues, including the intercivilizational and intercultural element in the activities of the United Nations overall. We find it quite justifiable that the leading intergovernmental human rights body should address the issue of the relationship and impact of human rights, norms and standards on traditional values. We are convinced that universal standards in the field of human rights should draw their inspiration from various civilizations and the cultural and historical traditions of various societies. That is what unites us rather than divides us in our commitment to human rights, and we believe that a sound basis for such an approach was established by the Council's special session in March of this year.

The Human Rights Council is only at the very first stage of its institutionalization. Whether it meets the hopes and faith placed in it depends largely on us, the Member States. A guarantee of success will lie in our readiness to listen to each other, to take into account and respect other's views and to implement the decisions that we ourselves have adopted. We urge Member States and representatives of civil society to bear that in mind in order to turn the Human Rights Council into a genuinely effective and efficient body.

Mr. Pak Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The international community established the Human Rights Council as a new organ in the hope that it would deal with the human rights issues of every country on an equal footing, through constructive dialogue and cooperation, discarding the shortcomings of its predecessor body, the Commission on Human Rights, in which confrontation, politicization, selectivity and double standards were rampant.

It was with that vision in mind that the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, now operational within the Council, was established. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, like many other countries, expected that the Universal Periodic Review mechanism process would develop into a meaningful mechanism, doing away with controversial country-specific resolutions.

However, the Council fails to meet the expectations of a vast majority of Member States by repeating the same mistakes of selectivity and double standards that paralysed the work of the former Commission on Human Rights. It has become apparent that a growing number of countries are opposed to politically motivated country-specific resolutions, which have nothing to do with the promotion and protection of human rights but seek to incite distrust and confrontation among States.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has always been opposed to country-specific resolutions, which are used only for the political purposes of certain countries or groups of countries. Regrettably, however, a stereotypical resolution on our country was adopted by the Council at its seventh session this past March, in defiance of the repeated calls by a large number of member States to discontinue the adoption of country-specific resolutions.

My delegation resolutely rejects resolution 7/15, contained in the report of the Human Rights Council as contradictory to the mission, purposes and methods of work of the Human Rights Council. The adoption of such a resolution is the most vivid manifestation of the act of politicization, selectivity and double standards. The resolution is close to paralysing the Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the Council, the function of which is to handle human rights situations in all countries on an equal footing, as the resolution calls for retaining the post of special rapporteur for an individual country, a vestige of the already defunct Human Rights Commission.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea respects international human rights bodies and attaches importance to their activities. However, it does not and cannot accept any sort of discriminatory treatment whatsoever by human rights organs. The resolution will only succeed in obstructing cooperation between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the

Human Rights Council and aggravating the mistrust and confrontation between them. The sponsors of the resolution will be held fully accountable for all the unpredictable consequences.

The future of the Human Rights Council will depend on how it can meet the expectations of States in terms of non-politicization, impartiality and non-selectivity in its activities. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to firmly guarantee the fundamental freedoms and rights of its citizens, both legally and in practice, on the basis of the people-centred Juche idea, and will make active contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide.

Mr. Soler Torrijos (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for his introduction of the Council's report to the General Assembly (A/63/53 and Add.1). We think that it is very important to continue reviewing the performance of the Council within the Assembly. The Charter of this Organization requires that its Members promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination as to race, gender, language or religion. Along with all States Members of the United Nations, Panama undertook that obligation and reiterates its firm commitment to it.

In our view, the Human Rights Council is the multilateral forum that, par excellence, must concern itself with infringements of human rights, including serious and systematic violations, as well as making recommendations in that respect. Panama believes that, rather than punishing human rights violations, constructive dialogue and cooperation must take precedence, so as to prevent those violations. Although the principal responsibility lies with the Human Rights Council, in order to guarantee the effectiveness of its recommendations it is necessary to incorporate human rights into the general activities of the United Nations system and achieve their effective coordination.

It is crucial that the Human Rights Council avoid excessive politicization and favouring interests extraneous to the promotion and protection of human rights, which damaged the credibility of its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights. In its work, the Council must be guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. In that regard, Panama is concerned by proposals aimed at weakening or eliminating the Special Procedures that could undermine the Council's ability to function effectively and independently. We encourage the members of that body to use the review of the Special Procedures to strengthen the system so that it is better equipped to support the Council in the protection of human rights.

Despite criticism of the Universal Periodic Review, my delegation should like to highlight some valuable practices in exercising the Review. In particular, we underscore the positive and novel practice of involving public and private actors in preparing the report of each State. We emphasize that high-level officials and experts in various fields of human rights have contributed to the Review of Member States. In our opinion, that reflects the importance and seriousness that Member States attribute to that exercise. Similarly, we welcome the Council's decision to assign the necessary funds for its execution, a step that will guarantee the impartiality of that Review.

We hope that the Human Rights Council will continue to develop in the near future. As Member States, we have the responsibility to ensure that that is the case. It is still a young body. Its successful development for the good of all the world's inhabitants depends on our cooperation.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 58 without prejudice to subsequent consideration of the report of the Third Committee on the same subject.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.